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Voltaire. *Letters Concerning the English Nation*. By M. de Voltaire. London: Printed for C. Davis ... and A. Lyon, 1733. First English edition.

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HZILLEH MOITAN M. D.F. VOLTAIRE O Deserving Pater Notes Rose.

LETTERS

CONCERNING THE

ENGLISH NATION.

BY

Mr. DE VOLTAIRE.



LONDON,

Printed for C. DAVIS in Pater-Noster-Row, and A. Lyon in Russel-Street, Covent-Garden.

M DCC XXXIII.

HONATE MA

Linguom that gave Brita for it and will, be well farisfied and will, be well farisfied with its Fortune, if it meets with a face with its Fortune, if it meets with the inversable a Reception as has been mainly do no all the other formal and the other which Mr. de Voltaire is a groof how ambitious be to a groof how ambitious be groof, and the other specialists to him but then

THE

PREFACE.

HE present Work appears. with Confidence in the Kingdom that gave Birth and will be well fatisfied with its Fortune, if it meets with as favourable a Reception as has been indulg'd to all the other Compositions of its Author. The high Esteem which Mr. de Voltaire has always discover'd for the English, is a Proof how ambitious he is of their Approbation. 'Tis now grown familiar to him, but then he is not tir'd with it; and indeed A 2 one

one wou'd be apt to think that this Circumstance is pleasing to the Nation, from the strong Desire they have to peruse whatever is publish'd under his Name.

WITHOUT pretending therefore to any great Penetration, we may venture to affure him that his Letters will meet with all the Success that cou'd be wish'd. Mr. de Voltaire is the Author of them, they were written in London, and relate particularly to the English Nation; three Circumstances which must necessarily recommend them. The great Freedom with which Mr. de Voltaire delivers himself in his various Observations, cannot give him any Apprehensions of their being less favourably receiv'd upon that Account, by a judicious People who abhor Flattery. The English are pleas'd to have their Faults pointed out to them, because this shews

shews at the same Time, that the Writer is able to distinguish their Merit.

WE must however confess, that these Letters were not design'd for the Public. They are the Refult of the Author's Complacency and Friendship for Mr. Thiriot, who had defir'd him, during his Stay in England, to favour him with fuch Remarks as he might make on the Manners and Customs of the British Nation. 'Tis well known that in a Correspondence of this kind, the most just and regular Writer does not propose to observe any Method. Mr. de Voltaire in all Probability follow'd no other Rule in the Choice of his Subjects than his particular Tafte, or perhaps the Queries of his Friend. Be this as it will, 'twas thought that the most natural Order in which they cou'd be plac'd, would A 3

would be that of their respective Dates. Several Particulars which are mention'd in them make it necessary for us to observe, that they were written between the latter End of 1728, and about 1731. The only Thing that can be regretted on this Occasion is, that so agreeable a Correspondence should

have continued no longer.

THE Reader will no doubt obferve, that the Circumstances in every Letter which had not an immediate relation to the Title of it, have
been omitted. This was done on
purpose; for Letters written with
the Considence and Simplicity of
personal Friendship, generally include certain Things which are not
proper for the Press. The Public
indeed thereby often lose a great
many agreeable Particulars; but
why should they complain, if the
want of them is compensated by a
thousand

thousand Beauties of another kind? The Variety of the Subjects, the Graces of the Diction, the Solidity of the Reflexions, the delicate Turn of the Criticism; in fine, the noble Fire, which enlivens all the Compositions of Mr. de Voltaire, delight the Reader perpetually. Even the most serious Letters, fuch as those which relate to Sir Isaac Newton's Philosophy, will be found entertaining. The Author has infus'd into his Subject all the delicate Touches it was susceptible of; deep and abstruse enough to shew that he was Master of it, and always perspicuous enough to be underflood.

Some of his English Readers may perhaps be diffatisfied at his not expatiating farther on their Constitution and their Laws, which A 4 most

most of them revere almost to Idolatry; but this Reservedness is an Effect of Mr. de Voltaire's Judgment. He contented himself with giving his Opinion of them in general Reflexions, the Cast of which is entirely new, and which prove that he had made this Part of the British Polity his particular Study. Befides, how was it poffible for a Foreigner to pierce thro' their Politicks, that gloomy Labyrinth, in which fuch of the English themselves as are best acquainted with it, confess daily that they are bewilder'd and loft?

WHILE this Work was in the Press, there came to London a Manuscript Letter of Mr. de Voltaire, in answer to the Complaints made by the Citizens of Hamburgh against a Passage in the History of Charles the Twelsth, relating

lating to the Burning of Altena. We thought proper to infert that Letter here, for the Use of those who have the History of Charles the Twelfth in English only.

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BOOKS

BOOKS Printed for C. DAVIS and A. Lyon.

I. THE History of Charles XII. King of Sweden. By Mr. De Veltaire. Translated from the French. With his Effigies engraved by Mr. Vertue.

II. Historical and Critical Remarks on the History of Charles XII. Design'd as a Supplement to that Work. In a Letter to Mr. Voltaire, by Mr. De la Motraye.

III. Henriade, an Epick Poem in ten Cantos, by Mr. De Voltaire. Translated into English Verse.

IV. Rosalinda, a Novel; intermix'd with a Variety of the most affecting Scenes, both of Diffress and Happiness. Translated from the French.

V. Philosophical Conversations; or a compleat System of Natural Philosophy, by way of Dialogue, with 89 Copper Plates. Written in French by Father Regnault, of the Society of Jesus. Translated into English, illustrated with Notes by Tho. Dale,

M. D. 3 Vol. 800.

N. B. The Defign of this Author is, like that of Mr. Fontenelle in his Plurality of Worlds, to render Natural Philosophy no less plain to the meanest Reader, than entertaining to the brightest; at the same Time his Reasoning is sounded upon such Experiments as have employ'd the Speculation of the greatest Philosophers in different Countries that this last Age has produced, particularly upon those in the German Ephemerides, the French Journals, and the Royal Academy of Sciences.

VI. Baxter's Gloffarium Antiquitatum Britannica-

rum & Romanarum, 2 Vol.

VII. A Treatise of the Small Pox, in two Parts, by Theophilus Lobb, M. D. and F. R. S.
VIII. Hust

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VIII. Husbandry and Trade improved, in several Letters, communicated by several eminent Members of the Royal Society to the Collector John Houghton, F. R. S. 4 Vol.

IX. Spectacle de la Nature : Or Nature display'd.

Being Discourses on such Particulars of natural Hiflory as were thought most proper to excite the Curiofity, and form the Minds of Youth. Illustrated with Copper Plates. Translated from the French.

N. B. The Author has herein explain'd, with great Wit and Reauty, the most curious Particudars in Nature relating to Terrestrial Animals, Birds, Infects, Fishes and Plants. If I might be allow'd to judge of the Success of this Book, from the Pleasure which the Reading of it gave me, I should pronounce it very great. 'Twas at my Request, and in Compliance with my most earnest Sollicitation, that the Author undertook this Work, &c. Vide Mr. Rollins's Preface to his History of the Egyptians, Carthaginians, &c. Vol. IV.

X. L'Henriade, Poeme Heroique en x Cantos,

par M. Voltaire, avec tres belles Figures, 4to. XI. A general History of Printing, from the first Invention of it in the City of Mentz, to its Propagation and Progress through most of the Kingdoms

in Europe. By S. Palmer, Printer, 4to. N. B. The fifth and last Part may be had sepa-

rate to compleat Gentlemen's Sets.

In the Press, and speedily will be publish'd in two Volumes 800.

Critical Notes on the Old Testament, shewing the Use of the ancient Versions, the Samaritan, the Syriac, the Vulgar, and particularly the LXXII, for explaining and in fome Places restoring the prefent Hebrew Text, drawn up according to the Order of Time in which the feveral Books were written. By the late learned William Wall, D. D. Au-Thor of The History of Infant Baptism.

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LETTERS

Concerning the

ENGLISH NATION.

LETTER I.

ONTHE

QUAKERS.

Was of opinion, that the doctrine and history of so extraordinary a people, were worthy the attention of the curious. To acquaint myself with them, I made a visit to one of the most eminent Quakers in England, who after having traded thirty years, had the wisdom to prescribe limits to his fortune and

to his defires, and was fettled in a little folitude not far from London. Being come into it, I perceiv'd a finall, but regularly built house, vastly neat, but without the least pomp of furniture. The Quaker who own'd it, was a hale ruddy complexion'd old man, who had never been afflicted with fickness, because he had always been infensible to passions, and a perfect stranger to intemperance. I never in my life faw a more noble or a more engaging afpect than his. He was drefs'd like those of his persuasion, in a plain coat, without pleats in the fides, or buttons on the pockets and fleeves; and had on a beaver, the brims of which were horizontal, like those of our clergy. He did not uncover himself when I appear'd, and advanc'd towards me without once stooping his body; but there appear'd more politeness in the open, humane air of his countenance, than in the custom of drawing one leg behind the other, and taking that from the head, which is made to cover it. Friend, fays he to me, I perceive thou art a stranger, but if I can do any thing for thee, only tell me. Sir,

fays I to him, bending forwards, and advancing as is usual with us, one leg towards him, I flatter myself that my just curiofity will not give you the least offence, and that you'll do me the honour to inform me of the particulars of your religion. The people of thy country, replied the Quaker, are too full of their bows and compliments, but I never yet met with one of them who had so much curiofity as thy felf. Come in, and let us first dine together. I still continued to make fome very unfeafonable ceremonies, it not being easy to disengage one's self at once from habits we have been long us'd to; and after taking part of a frugal meal, which began and ended with a prayer to God, I began to question my courteous hoft. I open'd with that which good Catholicks have more than once made to Huguenots. My dear fir, fays I, were you ever baptiz'd? I never was, replied the Quaker, nor any of my brethren. Zouns, fays I to him, you are not Christians then. Friend, replies the old man in a foft tone of voice, fwear not; we are Christians, and endeavour to be good Christians, B 2

Christians, but we are not of opinion, that the fprinkling water on a child's head makes him a Christian. Heavens! fays I, shock'd at his impiety, you have then forgot that Christ was baptiz'd by St. John. Friend, replies the mild Quaker once again, fwear not. Christ indeed was baptiz'd by John, but he himfelf never baptiz'd any one. We are the disciples of Christ, not of John. I pitied very much the fincerity of my worthy Quaker, and was absolutely for forcing him to get himfelf christned. Were that all, replied he very gravely, we would fubmit chearfully to baptism, purely in compliance with thy weakness, for we don't condemn any person who uses it; but then we think, that those who profess a religion of so holy, fo spiritual a nature as that of Christ, ought to abstain to the utmost of their power from the Jewish ceremonies. O unaccountable! fays I, what! baptism a Fewish ceremony? Yes, my friend fays he, fo truly Jewish, that a great many Fews use the baptism of John to this day. Look into ancient authors, and thou wilt find that John only reviv'd this practice;

practice; and that it had been us'd by the Hebrews, long before his time, in like manner as the Mahometans imitated the Ishmaelites in their pilgrimages to Mecca. Fesus indeed submitted to the baptism of John, as he had fuffer'd himself to be circumcis'd; but circumcifion and the washing with water ought to be abolish'd by the baptism of Christ, that baptism of the spirit, that ablution of the foul, which is the falvation of mankind. Thus the forerunner said, I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance; but he that cometh after me, is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire *. Likewise Paul the great apostle of the Gentiles, writes as follows to the Corinthians; Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel +; and indeed Paul never baptiz'd but two persons with water, and that very much against his inclinations. He circumcis'd his difciple Timothy, and the other disciples likewise circumcis'd all who were willing

* St. Matth. iii. 11. + 1 Cor. i. 17.

to fubmit to that carnal ordinance. But art thou circumcis'd, added he? I have not the honour to be fo, fays I. Well, friend, continues the Quaker, thou art a Christian without being circumcis'd, and I am one without being baptiz'd. Thus did this pious man make a wrong, but very fpecious application, of four or five texts of scripture which seem'd to favour the tenets of his fect; but at the same time forgot very fincerely an hundred texts which made directly against them. I had more fense than to contest with him. fince there is no possibility of convincing an enthusiast. A man shou'd never pretend to inform a lover of his miftress's faults, no more than one who is at law, of the badness of his cause; nor attempt to win over a fanatic by strength of reafoning. Accordingly I wav'd the fubject.

Well, fays I to him, what fort of a communion have you? We have none like that thou hintest at among us, replied he. How! no communion, says I? Only that spiritual one, replied he, of hearts. He then began again to throw

out his texts of scripture; and preach'd a most eloquent fermon against that ordinance. He harangued in a tone as tho' he had been inspir'd, to prove that the sacraments were merely of human invention, and that the word facrament, was not once mention'd in the gospel. Excuse, says he, my ignorance, for I have not employ'd an hundredth part of the arguments which might be brought, to prove the truth of our religion, but these thou thy felf mayest peruse in the Exposition of our Faith written by Robert Barclay. 'Tis one of the best pieces that ever was penn'd by man; and as our adversaries confess it to be of dangerous tendency, the arguments in it must neceffarily be very convincing. I promis'd to peruse this piece, and my Quaker imagin'd he had already made a convert of me. He afterwards gave me an account in few words, of some singularities which make this fect the contempt of others. Confess, says he, that 'twas very difficult for thee to refrain from laughter, when I answer'd all thy civilities without uncovering my head, and at the fame B 4

time faid Thee and Thou to thee. However, thou appearest to me too well read, not to know that in Christ's time no nation was fo ridiculous as to put the plural number for the fingular. Augustus Casar himself was spoke to in such phrases as these, I love thee, I beseech thee, I thank thee; but he did not allow any person to call him Domine, Sir. 'Twas not till many ages after, that men wou'd have the word You, as tho' they were double, instead of Thou employ'd in speaking to them: and usurp'd the flattering titles of lordship. of eminence, and of holiness, which mere worms bestow on other worms, by affuring them that they are with a most profound respect, and an infamous falfhood, their most obedient, humble fervants. 'Tis to fecure our felves more ftrongly from fuch a shameless traffick of lies and flattery, that we thee and thou a king with the fame freedom as we do a beggar, and falute no person; we owing nothing to mankind but charity, and to the laws respect and obedience.

Our apparel is also somewhat different from that of others, and this purely, that

it may be a perpetual warning to us not to imitate them. Others wear the badges and marks of their feveral dignities, and we those of christian humility. We fly from all affemblies of pleasure, from diverfions of every kind, and from places where gaming is practis'd; and indeed our case wou'd be very deplorable, should we fill with fuch levities as those I have mention'd, the heart which ought to be the habitation of God. We never fwear, not even in a court of justice, being of opinion that the most holy name of God ought not to be proftituted in the miserable contests betwixt man and man. When we are oblig'd to appear before a magistrate upon other people's account, (for law-fuits are unknown among the friends) we give evidence to the truth by fealing it with our yea or nay; and the judges believe us on our bare affirmation, whilst fo many other Christians forswear themfelves on the holy Gospels. We never war or fight in any case; but 'tis not that we are afraid, for fo far from shuddering at the thoughts of death, we on the contrary bless the moment which unites

10 LETTERS concerning

us with the Being of Beings; but the reason of our not using the outward fword is, that we are neither wolves, tygers, nor mastiffs, but men and Christians. Our God, who has commanded us to love our enemies, and to fuffer without repining, would certainly not permit us to crofs the feas, merely because murtherers cloath'd in fcarlet, and wearing caps two foot high enlist citizens by a noise made with two little sticks on an ass's skin extended. And when, after a victory is gain'd, the whole city of London is illuminated; when the sky is in a blaze with fireworks, and a noise is heard in the air of thankfgivings, of bells, of organs, and of the cannon, we groan in filence, and are deeply affected with fadness of spirit and brokenness of heart, for the fad havock which is the occasion of those public rejoycings.

LETTER II.

LETTER II.

ONTHE

QUAKERS.

SUCH was the fubstance of the conversation I had with this very singular person; but I was greatly surprized to see him come the Sunday sollowing, and take me with him to the Quaker's meeting. There are several of these in London, but that which he carried me to stands near the samous pillar call'd the monument. The brethren were already assembled at my entring it with my guide. There might be about sour hundred men and three hundred women in the meeting. The women hid their saces behind their sans, and the men were cover'd

12 LETTERS concerning

cover'd with their broad-brimm'd hats; all were feated, and the filence was univerfal. I past through them, but did not perceive fo much as one lift up his eyes to look at me. This filence lasted a quarter of an hour, when at last one of them rose up, took off his hat, and after making a variety of wry faces, and groaning in a most lamentable manner, he partly from his nose, and partly from his mouth, threw out a strange, confus'd jumble of words, (borrow'd as he imagin'd from the Gospel) which neither himself nor any of his hearers under-When this distorter had ended his beautiful foliloquy, and that the stupid, but greatly edified, congregation were feparated, I ask'd my friend how it was possible for the judicious part of their affembly to fuffer fuch a babbling. We are oblig'd, fays he, to fuffer it, because no one knows when a man rifes up to hold forth, whether he will be mov'd by the spirit or by folly. In this doubt and uncertainty we liften patiently to every one, we even allow our women to hold forth; two or three of these are often

often inspir'd at one and the same time, and 'tis then that a most charming noise is heard in the Lord's house. You have then no priests, fays I to him. No, no, friend, replies the Quaker, to our great happinefs. Then opening one of the friend's books, as he call'd it, he read the following words in an emphatic tone: God forbid we should presume to ordain any one to receive the holy spirit on the Lord's day, to the prejudice of the reft of the brethren. Thanks to the almighty, we are the only people upon earth that have no priests. Wouldest thou deprive us of fo happy a distinction? Why shou'd we abandon our babe to mercenary nurses, when we our selves have milk enough for it? These mercenary creatures wou'd foon domineer in our houses, and destroy both the mother and the babe. God has faid, freely you have receiv'd, freely give. Shall we after these words cheapen, as it were, the Gospel; sell the Holy Ghost, and make of an affembly of Christians a mere shop of traders. We don't pay a fett of men cloath'd in black, to affift our poor, to bury our dead, or to preach to the brethren; these offices are all of too tender a nature, for us ever to entrust them to others. But how is it possible for you, fays I, with some warmth, to know whether your difcourse is really inspir'd by the Almighty? Whofoever, fays he, shall implore Christ to enlighten him, and shall publish the Gospel truths, he may feel inwardly, fuch an one may be affur'd that he is inspir'd by the Lord. He then pour'd forth a numberless multitude of Scripture-texts, which prov'd, as he imagin'd, that there is no fuch thing as Christianity without an immediate revelation, and added these remarkable words: When thou movest one of thy limbs, is it mov'd by thy own power? Certainly not, for this limb is often fenfible to involuntary motions; confequently he who created thy body, gives motion to this earthly tabernacle. And are the feveral ideas of which thy foul receives the impression form'd by thy self? Much less are they, fince these pour in upon thy mind whether thou wilt or no; confe-

the English Nation.

confequently thou receivest thy ideas from him who created thy foul: But as he leaves thy affections at full liberty, he gives thy mind fuch ideas as thy affections may deserve; if thou livest in God, thou actest, thou thinkest in God. After this thou needest only but open thine eyes to that light which enlightens all mankind, and 'tis then thou wilt perceive the truth, and make others perceive it. Why this, fays I, is Malbranche's doctrine to a tittle. I am acquainted with thy Malbranche, fays he; he had fomething of the friend in him, but was not enough fo. These are the most considerable particulars I learnt concerning the doctrine of the Quakers; in my next letter I shall acquaint you with their history, which you will find more fingular than their opinions.



LETTER III.

LETTER III.

ONTHE

QUAKERS.

OU have already heard that the Quakers date from Christ, who according to them was the first Quaker. Religion, fay these, was corrupted, a little after his death, and remain'd in that state of corruption about 1600 Years. But there were always a few Quakers conceal'd in the world, who carefully preserv'd the sacred fire, which was extinguish'd in all but themfelves, 'till at last this light spread it self in England in 1642.

'Twas at the time when Great-Britain was torn to pieces by the intestine

wars,

^{*} Fox could read at that age.

wou'd have had him fworn before he ask'd him any questions: Know, friend, fays Fox to him, that I never fwear. The justice observing he Thee'd and Thou'd him, fent him to the house of correction in Derby, with orders that he should be whipp'd there. Fox prais'd the Lord all the way he went to the house of correction, where the justice's order was executed with the utmost severity. The men who whipp'd this enthusiast, were greatly surpriz'd to hear him befeech them to give him a few more lashes for the good of his foul. There was no need of intreating these people; the lashes were repeated, for which Fox thank'd them very cordially, and began to preach. At first, the spe-Ctators fell a laughing, but they afterwards liftned to him; and as enthufiasm is an epidemical distemper, many were perfuaded, and those who scourg'd him became his first disciples. Being set at liberty, he ran up and down the country with a dozen profelytes at his heels, still declaiming against the clergy, and was whipp'd from time to time. Being one

one day fet in the pillory, he harangued the crowd in fo strong and moving a manner, that fifty of the auditors became his converts; and he won the rest so much in his favour, that his head being freed tumultuously from the hole where it was fastned, the populace went and fearch'd for the church of England clergyman, who had been chiefly instrumental in bringing him to this punishment, and fet him on the fame pillory where Fox had stood.

Fox was bold enough to convert fome of Oliver Cromwell's Soldiers. who thereupon quitted the fervice and refus'd to take the oaths. Oliver having as great a contempt for a fect which would not allow its members to fight, as Sixtus Quintus had for another fect, Dove non si chiavava, began to perfecute these new converts. The prifons were crouded with them, but perfecution feldom has any other effect than to increase the number of proselytes. These came therefore from their confinement, more strongly confirmed in the principles they had imbib'd, and follow'd by their goalers whom they had brought over to their belief. But the circumstances which contributed chiefly to the fpreading of this fect were as follows. Fox thought himself inspir'd, and consequently was of opinion, that he must speak in a manner different from the rest of mankind. He thereupon began to writhe his body, to screw up his face, to hold in his breath, and to exhale it in a forcible manner, infomuch that the priestess of the Pythian God at Delphos could not have acted her part to better advantage. Inspiration foon became fo habitual to him, that he cou'd fcarce deliver himself in any other manner. This was the first gift he communicated to his disciples. These ap'd very sincerely their mafter's feveral grimaces, and shook in every limb the instant the fit of inspiration came upon them, whence they were call'd Quakers. The vulgar attempted to mimick them, they trembled, they fpake thro' the nofe; they quak'd and fancied themselves inspir'd by the Holy Ghost. The only thing now wanting

was

the English Nation. 21

was a few miracles, and accordingly they

wrought some.

FOX, this modern patriarch, spoke thus to a justice of peace, before a large affembly of people. Friend, take care what thou dost: God will soon punish thee for perfecuting his faints. This magistrate being one who besotted himself every day with bad beer and brandy, died of an apoplexy two days after, the moment he had fign'd a mittimus for imprifoning fome Quakers. The fudden death with which this justice was seiz'd, was not ascrib'd to his intemperance, but was univerfally look'd upon as the effect of the holy man's predictions; fo that this accident made more converts to Quakerism, than a thousand sermons and as many shaking fits cou'd have done. Oliver finding them increase daily was defirous of bringing them over to his party, and for that purpose attempted to bribe them by money. However, they were incorruptible, which made him one day declare, that this religion was the only one he had ever met with that had refifted the charms of gold.

C 3

THE

22 LETTERS concerning -

THE Quakers were feveral times perfecuted under Charles the fecond, not upon a religious account, but for refufing to pay the tythes, for Thee-ing and Thou-ing the magistrates, and for refufing to take the oaths enacted by the laws.

AT last Robert Barclay, a native of Scotland, prefented to the king in 1675, his apology for the Quakers, a work as well drawn up as the fubject cou'd poffibly admit. The dedication to Charles the fecond is not fill'd with mean, flattering encomiums; but abounds with bold touches in favour of truth, and with the wifest counsels. " Thou hast " tafted," fays he to the king at the close of his epiftle dedicatory, " of prosperi-"ty and adversity; thou knowest what " it is to be banished thy native coun-" try; to be over-rul'd as well as to rule. " and fit upon the throne; and being " oppressed, thou hast reason to know " how hateful the oppressor is both to "God and man: If after all thefe " warnings and advertisements, thou dost " not turn unto the Lord with all thy " heart:

" heart; but forget him who remembred

"thee in thy diffres, and give up thy.

" felf to follow lust and vanity, furely

" great will be thy condemnation.

" AGAINST which fnare, as well as

" the temptation of those, that may or

" do feed thee, and prompt thee to evil,

" the most excellent and prevalent reme-

" dy will be, to apply thy felf to that

" light of Christ, which shineth in thy

" conscience, which neither can nor will

" flatter thee, nor fuffer thee to be at

" ease in thy fins; but doth and will

" deal plainly and faithfully with thee, as those, that are followers thereof

"have plainly done — Thy faithful

" friend and subject, ROBERT BARCLAY.

A more furprizing circumstance is, that this epistle, written by a private man of no figure, was so happy in its effects as to put a stop to the persecution.

LETTER IV.

ONTHE

QUAKERS.

BOUT this * time arose the illustrious William Pen, who establish'd the power of the Quakers in America, and would have made them appear venerable in the eyes of the Europeans, were it possible for mankind to respect virtue, when reveal'd in a ridiculous light. He was the only fon of vice-admiral Pen, favourite to the duke of York, afterwards king James the second.

WILLIAM PEN at twenty years of age happening to meet with a + Quaker in Cork, whom he had known at Oxford, this man made a profelyte of

* 1666. † Thomas Loe.

him,

him; and William being a sprightly youth, and naturally eloquent, having a winning aspect, and a very engaging carriage, he soon gain'd over some of his Intimates. He carried matters so far that he form'd by insensible degrees a society of young Quakers who met at his house; so that he was at the head of a sect when a little above twenty.

BEING return'd, after his leaving Cork, to the vice-admiral his father, instead of falling upon his knees to ask him bleffing, he went up to him with his hat on, and faid, Friend, I'm very glad to fee thee in good health. The vice-admiral imagin'd his fon to be crazy; but foon finding he was turn'd Quaker, he employ'd all the methods that prudence could fuggest, to engage him to behave and act like other people. The youth made no other answer to his father, than by exhorting him to turn Quaker also. At last his father confin'd himself to this single request, viz. that he shou'd wait upon the king and the duke of York with his hat under his arm, and shou'd not Thee and Thou them. them. William answer'd, that he could not do these things for conscience sake, which exasperated his father to such a degree, that he turn'd him out of doors. Young Pen gave God thanks, for permitting him to suffer so early in his cause, after which he went into the city, where he held forth *, and made a great number of converts.

THE church of England clergy found their congregations dwindle away daily; and Pen being young, handsome, and of a graceful stature, the court as well as the city ladies slock'd very devoutly to his meeting. The patriarch George Fox hearing of his great reputation, came to London, (tho' the journey was very long) purely to see and converse with him. Both resolv'd to go upon missions into foreign countries, and accordingly they embark'd for Holland, after having left labourers sufficient to take care of the London vineyard.

THEIR labours were crown'd with fuccess in Amsterdam; but a circumstance which reslected the greatest ho-

^{*} About 1668, and the 24th year of his age.

nour on them, and at the same time put their humility to the greatest trial, was the reception they met with from Elizabeth the princess Palatine, aunt to George the first of Great-Britain, a lady conspicuous for her genius and knowledge, and to whom Des Cartes had dedicated his Philosophical Romance.

SHE was then retir'd to the Hague, where she receiv'd these friends, for so the Quakers were at that time call'd in Holland. This princess had several conferences with them in her palace, and the at last entertain'd so favourable an opinion of Quakerism, that they confefs'd she was not far from the kingdom of heaven. The friends fow'd likewise the good feed in Germany, but reap'd very little fruit; for the mode of Thee-ing and Thou-ing was not approv'd of in a country, where a man is perpetually oblig'd to employ the titles of highness and excellency. William Pen return'd foon to England upon hearing of his father's fickness, in order to see him before he died. The vice-admiral was reconcil'd to his fon, and tho' of a different different persuasion, embrac'd him tenderly. William made a fruitless exhortation to his father not to receive the sacrament, but to die a Quaker; and the good old man intreated his son William to wear buttons on his sleeves, and a crape hatband in his beaver, but all to no

purpose.

WILLIAM PEN inherited very large possessions, part of which consisted in crown-debts due to the vice-admiral for fums he had advanc'd for the fea-fervice. No monies were at that time more fecure than those owing from the king. Pen was oblig'd to go more than once. and Thee and Thou king Charles and his ministers, in order to recover the debt; and at last instead of specie, the government invested him with the right and sovereignty of a province of America, to the fouth of Maryland. Thus was a Quaker rais'd to sovereign power. Pen fet fail for his new dominions with two ships freighted with Quakers, who follow'd his fortune. The country was then call'd Penfilvania from William Pen, who there founded Philadelphia, now

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now the most flourishing city in that country. The first step he took was to enter into an alliance with his American neighbours; and this is the only treaty between those people and the Christians that was not ratisfied by an oath, and was never insring'd. The new sovereign was at the same time the legislator of Pensilvania, and enacted very wise and prudent laws, none of which have ever been chang'd since his time. The first is, to injure no person upon a religious account, and to consider as brethren all those who believe in one God.

HE had no fooner fettled his government, but feveral American merchants came and peopled this colony. The natives of the country instead of slying into the woods, cultivated by insensible degrees a friendship with the peaceable Quakers. They lov'd these foreigners as much as they detested the other Christians who had conquer'd and laid waste America. In a little time, a great number of these savages (falsely so call'd) charm'd with the mild and gentle disposition

WILLIAM PEN might glory in having brought down upon earth the fo much boafted golden age, which in all probability never existed but in Pensilvania. He return'd to England to settle some affairs relating to his new dominions. After the death of king Charles the second, king James, who had lov'd the father, indulg'd the same affection to the son, and no longer consider'd him as an obscure Sectary, but as a very great man.

the English Nation.

man. The king's politicks on this occafion agreed with his inclinations. He was defirous of pleafing the Quakers, by annulling the laws made against Nonconformists, in order to have an opportunity, by this universal toleration, of establishing the Romish religion. All the fectarists in England saw the snare that was laid for them, but did not give into it; they never failing to unite when the Romish religion, their common enemy, is to be oppos'd. But Pen did not think himself bound in any manner to renounce his principles, merely to favour Protestants to whom he was odious, in opposition to a king who lov'd him. He had establish'd an universal toleration with regard to conscience in America, and wou'd not have it thought that he intended to destroy it in Europe; for which reason he adhered so inviolably to king James, that a report prevail'd univerfally of his being a Jesuit. This calumny affected him very strongly, and he was oblig'd to justify himself in print. However, the unfortunate king James the fecond, in whom, as in most princes

of the Stuart family, grandeur and weakness were equally blended; and who, like them, as much overdid some things as he was short in others, lost his kingdom in a manner that is hardly to be accounted for.

ALL the English sectarists accepted from William the third and his parliament, the toleration and indulgence which they had refus'd when offer'd by king James. 'Twas then the Quakers began to enjoy, by virtue of the laws, the feveral privileges they possess at this time. Pen having at last seen Quakerism firmly establish'd in his native country, went back to Penfilvania. His own people and the Americans receiv'd him with tears of joy, as tho' he had been a father who was return'd to visit his children. All the laws had been religiously observ'd in his absence, a circumstance in which no legislator had ever been happy but himfelf. After having refided fome years in Penfilvania, he left it, but with great reluctance, in order to return to England, there to folicit some matters in favour of the commerce of PenfilPensilvania. But he never saw it again, he dying in Ruscomb in Berkshire, anno

1718.

I AM not able to guess what fate Quakerism may have in America, but I perceive it dwindles away daily in England. In all countries where liberty of confcience is allow'd, the establish'd religion will at last swallow up all the rest. Quakers are disqualified from being members of parliament; nor can they enjoy any post or preferment, because an oath must always be taken on these occasions, and they never fwear. They are therefore reduc'd to the necessity of subsisting upon traffick. Their children, whom the industry of their parents has enrich'd, are defirous of enjoying honours, of wearing buttons and ruffles; and quite asham'd of being call'd Quakers, they become converts to the Church of England, merely to be in the fashion.

LETTER V.

ONTHE

CHURCH

ENGLAND.

NGLAND is properly the country of fectarists. Multæ sunt man-I hones in domo patris mei (in my father's house are many mansions.) An Englishman, as one to whom liberty is natural, may go to heaven his own way.

NEVERTHELESS, tho' every one is permitted to ferve God in whatever mode or fashion he thinks proper, yet their true religion, that in which a man makes

his

of

his fortune, is the fect of Episcoparians or Churchmen, call'd the Church of England, or fimply the Church, by way of eminence. No person can possess an employment either in England or Ireland, unless he be rank'd among the faithful, that is, professes himself a member of the Church of England. This reason (which carries mathematical evidence with it) has converted fuch numbers of differenters of all perfuafions, that not a twentieth part of the nation is out of the pale of the establish'd church. The English clergy have retain'd a great number of the Romish ceremonies, and especially that of receiving, with a most scrupulous attention, their tithes. They also have the pious ambition to aim at fuperiority.

Moreover, they inspire very religiously their flock with a holy zeal against Disfenters of all denominations. This zeal was pretty violent under the Tories, in the four last years of queen Anne; but was productive of no greater mischief than the breaking the windows of fome meeting-houses, and the demolishing D 2

of a few of them. For religious rage ceas'd in England with the civil wars; and was no more under queen Anne, than the hollow noise of a sea whose billows still heav'd, tho' so long after the storm, when the Whigs and Tories laid waste their native country, in the same manner as the Guelphs and Gibelins formerly did theirs. 'Twas abfolutely necessary for both parties to call in religion on this occasion; the Tories declar'd for episcopacy, and the Whigs, as fome imagin'd, were for abolishing it; however, after these had got the upper hand, they contented themselves with only abridging it.

At the time when the earl of Oxford and the lord Bolingbroke us'd to drink healths to the Tories, the Church of England confider'd those noblemen as the defenders of it's holy privileges. The lower house of Convocation (a kind of house of Commons) compos'd wholly of the clergy, was in some credit at that time; at least the members of it had the liberty to meet, to dispute on eccle-staffical matters, to sentence impious

books from time to time to the flames, that is, books written against themselves. The ministry, which is now compos'd of Whigs, does not fo much as allow those gentlemen to affemble, fo that they are at this time reduc'd (in the obscurity of their respective parishes) to the melancholy occupation of praying for the prosperity of the government, whose tranquillity they would willingly disturb. With regard to the bishops, who are twenty fix in all, they still have feats in the house of lords in spite of the Whigs, because the ancient abuse of confidering them as Barons subfifts to this day. There is a clause however in the oath which the government requires from these gentlemen, that puts their christian patience to a very great trial, viz. that they shall be of the Church of England as by law establish'd. There are few bishops, deans, or other dignitaries, but imagine they are so jure divino; 'tis confequently a great mortification to them to be oblig'd to confess, that they owe their dignity to a pitiful law enacted by a fett of profane laymen. A D 3 learned

learned monk (father Courayer) writ a book lately to prove the validity and fuccession of English ordinations. This book was forbid in France; but do you believe that the English ministry were pleas'd with it? Far from it. Those damn'd Whigs don't value a straw, whether the episcopal succession among them hath been interrupted or not, or whether bishop Parker was consecrated (as 'tis pretended) in a tavern, or a church; for these Whigs are much better pleas'd that the bishops should derive their authority from the parliament, than from the apostles. The lord B-obferv'd, that this notion of divine right would only make fo many tyrants in lawn-fleeves, but that the laws made fo many citizens.

WITH regard to the morals of the English clergy, they are more regular than those of France, and for this reafon. All the clergy (a very few excepted) are educated in the univerfities of Oxford or Cambridge, far from the depravity and corruption which reign in the capital. They are not call'd to dignities

dignities till very late, at a time of life when men are sensible of no other passion but avarice, that is, when their ambition craves a fupply. Employments are here bestow'd both in the church and the army, as a reward for long fervices; and we never fee youngsters made bishops or colonels immediately upon their laying afide the academical gown; and befides, most of the clergy are married. The stiff and awkward air contracted by them at the university, and the little familiarity the men of this country have with the ladies, commonly oblige a bishop to confine himself to, and rest contented with his own. Clergymen fometimes take a glass at the tavern, custom giving them a fanction on this occasion: and if they fuddle themselves 'tis in a very ferious manner, and without giving the least scandal.

THAT fable mix'd kind of mortal (not to be defin'd) who is neither of the clergy nor of the laity; in a word, the thing call'd Abbé in France, is a species quite unknown in England. All the clergy here are very much upon the reserve, and most

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of them pedants. When these are told, that in France, young fellows famous for their diffoluteness and rais'd to the highest dignities of the church by female intrigues, address the fair publickly in an amorous way, amuse themselves in writing tender love-fongs, entertain their friends very splendidly every night at their own houses, and after the banquet is ended, withdraw to invoke the affiftance of the Holy Ghoft, and call themselves boldly the successors of the apostles, they bless God for their being Protestants. But, these are shameless Hereticks, who deferve to be blown hence thro' the flames to old Nick, as Rabelais fays, and for this reason I don't trouble my felf about them.



LETTER VI.

LETTER VI.

ONTHE

PRESBYTERIANS.

THE Church of England is confin'd almost to the kingdom whence it receiv'd its name, and to Ireland, for Presbyterianism is the establish'd religion in Scotland. This Presbyterianism is directly the same with Calvinism, as it was establish'd in France, and is now profess'd at Geneva. As the priefts of this fect receive but very inconfiderable stipends from their churches, and confequently cannot emulate the splendid luxury of bishops, they exclaim very naturally against honours which they can never attain to. Figure to your felf the haughty Diogenes, trampling under

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der foot the pride of Plato. The Scotch Presbyterians are not very unlike that proud, tho' tatter'd reasoner. Diogenes did not use Alexander half so impertinently as these treated king Charles the fecond; for when they took up arms in his cause, in opposition to Oliver, who had deceiv'd them, they forc'd that poor monarch to undergo the hearing of three or four fermons every day; wou'd not fuffer him to play, reduc'd him to a state of penitence and mortification; so that Charles foon grew fick of these pedants, and accordingly elop'd from them with as much joy as a youth does from school.

A Church of England minister appears as another Cato in presence of a juvenile, sprightly French graduate, who bawls for a whole morning together in the divinity schools, and hums a fong in chorus with ladies in the evening: But this Cato is a very spark, when before a Scotch Presbyterian. The latter affects a ferious gate, puts on a four look, wears a vastly broad-brimm'd hat, and a long cloak over a very short coat; preaches

thro' the nose, and gives the name of the whore of Babylon to all churches, where the ministers are so fortunate as to enjoy an annual revenue of five or six thousand pounds; and where the people are weak enough to suffer this, and to give them the titles of my lord, your lord-

ship, or your eminence.

These gentlemen, who have also some churches in England, introduc'd there the mode of grave and severe exhortations. To them is owing the fanctification of Sunday in the three kingdoms. People are there forbid to work or take any recreation on that day, in which the severity is twice as great as that of the Romish church. No opera's, plays or concerts are allow'd in London on Sundays; and even cards are so expressly forbid, that none but persons of quality and those we call the genteel, play on that day; the rest of the nation go either to church, to the tavern, or to see their mistresses.

Tho' the Episcopal and Presbyterian sects are the two prevailing ones in Great-Britain, yet all others are very welcome to come and settle in it, and live very sociably

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fociably together, tho' most of their preachers hate one another almost as cordially as a Jansenist damns a Jesuit.

TAKE a view of the Royal-Exchange in London, a place more venerable than many courts of justice, where the reprefentatives of all nations meet for the benefit of mankind. There the Jew, the Mahometan, and the Christian transact together as tho' they all profess'd the fame religion, and give the name of Infidel to none but bankrupts. There the Presbyterian confides in the Anabaptist, and the Churchman depends on the Quaker's word. At the breaking up of this pacific and free affembly, fome withdraw to the fynagogue, and others to take a glass. This man goes and is baptiz'd in a great tub, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost: That man has his fon's foreskin cut off, whilst a fett of Hebrew words (quite unintelligible to him) are mumbled over his child. Others retire to their churches, and there wait for the inspiration of heaven with their hats on, and all are fatisfied

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If one religion only were allowed in England, the government would very possibly become arbitrary; if there were but two, the people wou'd cut one another's throats; but as there are such a multitude, they all live happy and in peace.



LETTER VII.

LETTER VII.

ONTHE

SOCINIANS,

OR

ARIANS.

OR

ANTITRINITARIANS.

THERE is a little sect here compos'd of clergymen, and of a few very learned persons among the laity, who, tho' they don't call themselves Arians or Socinians, do yet diffent entirely from St. Athanafius, with regard to their notions of the Trinity, and

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and declare very frankly, that the Fa-

ther is greater than the Son.

Do you remember what is related of a certain orthodox bishop, who in order to convince an emperor of the reality of confubstantiation, put his hand under the chin of the monarch's fon, and took him by the nose in presence of his sacred majesty? The emperor was going to order his attendants to throw the bishop out of the window, when the good old man gave him this handsome and convincing reason: Since your majesty, says he, is angry when your fon has not due respect shown him, what punishment do you think will God the father inflict on those who refuse his son Jesus the titles due to him? The persons I just now mention'd, declare that the holy bishop took a very wrong step; that his argument was inconclusive, and that the emperor should have answer'd him thus: Know that there are two ways by which men may be wanting in respect to me; first, in not doing honour sufficient to my fon; and fecondly, in paying him the fame honour as to me.

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BE this as it will, the principles of Arius begin to revive, not only in England but in Holland and Poland. The celebrated fir Ifaac Newton honour'd this opinion fo far as to countenance it. This philosopher thought that the Unitarians argued more mathematically than we do. But the most fanguine stickler for Arianism is the illustrious Dr. Clark. This man is rigidly virtuous, and of a mild disposition; is more fond of his tenets than desirous of propagating them; and absorb'd so entirely in problems and calculations, that he is a mere reasoning machine,

'Tis he who wrote a book which is much esteem'd and little understood, on the existence of God; and another more intelligible, but pretty much contemned, on the truth of the Christian religion.

HE never engag'd in scholastic disputes, which our friend calls venerable trisles. He only publish'd a work containing all the testimonies of the primitive ages, for and against the Unitarians, and leaves to the reader the counting of the voices, and the liberty of forming a judg-

thent. This book won the doctor a great number of partizans, and lost him the See of *Canterbury*: But in my humble opinion, he was out in his calculation, and had better have been Primate of all *England*, than meerly an *Arian* parfon.

You fee that opinions are subject to revolutions as well as Empires. Arianism after having triumph'd during three centuries, and been forgot twelve, rifes at last out of its own ashes; but it has chose a very improper feafon to make its appearance in, the present age being quite cloy'd with disputes and Sects. The members of this Sect are, besides, too few to be indulg'd the liberty of holding public affemblies, which however they will doubtless be permitted to do, in case they fpread confiderably. But people are now fo very cold with respect to all things of this kind, that there is little probability any new religion, or old one that may be reviv'd, will meet with favour. Is it not whimfical enough that Luther, Calvin and Zuinglius, all of 'em wretched authors, should have founded Sects which

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are now spread over a great part of Europe; that Mahomet, tho' so ignorant, should have given a religion to Asia and Africa; and that Sir Isaac Newton, Dr. Glark, Mr. Locke, Mr. Le Clerc &c. the greatest philosophers, as well as the ablest writers of their ages, should scarce have been able to raise a little flock, which even decreases daily.

This it is to be born at a proper period of time. Were Cardinal de Retz to return again into the world, neither his eloquence nor his intrigues would draw together ten women in Paris.

Were Oliver Cromwell, he who beheaded his Sovereign and feiz'd upon the kingly dignity, to rife from the dead, he wou'd be a wealthy city trader, and no more.



LETTER VIII.

LETTER VIII.

ONTHE

PARLIAMENT.

THE Members of the English Parliament are fond of comparing themselves to the old Romans.

Not long fince, Mr. Shippen open'd a speech in the house of Commons with these words, The Majesty of the People of England would be wounded. The fingularity of the expression occasion'd a loud laugh; but this Gentleman, so far from being disconcerted, repeated the same words with a refolute tone of voice, and the laugh ceas'd. In my opinion, the Majesty of the people of England has nothing in common with that of the people

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of Rome, much less is there any affinity between their governments. There is in London a Senate, fome of the members whereof are accus'd, (doubtlefs very unjustly) of selling their voices on certain occasions, as was done in Rome; this is the only refemblance. Befides, the two nations appear to me quite opposite in character, with regard both to good and The Romans never knew the dreadful folly of religious Wars, an abomination referv'd for devout Preachers of patience and humility. Marius and Sylla, Cæfar and Pompey, Anthony and Augustus, did not draw their fwords and fet the world in a blaze, merely to determine whether the Flamen should wear his shirt over his robe, or his robe over his shirt; or whether the sacred Chickens should eat and drink, or eat only, in order to take the augury. The English have hang'd one another by law, and cut one another to pieces in pitch battles, for quarrels of as trifling a nature. The Sects of the Episcoparians and Presbyterians quite distracted these very serious Heads for a time. But I fan-

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I fancy they'll hardly ever be so filly again, they seeming to be grown wiser at their own expence; and I don't perceive the least inclination in them to murther one another merely about syllogisms, as some Zealots among them once did.

But here follows a more effential difference between Rome and England, which gives the advantage entirely to the latter, viz. that the civil wars of Rome ended in flavery, and those of the English in liberty. The English are the only people upon earth who have been able to prescribe limits to the power of Kings by refifting them; and who, by a feries of struggles, have at last establish'd that wise Government, where the Prince is all powerful to do good, and at the fame time is restrain'd from committing evil; where the Nobles are great without infolence, tho' there are no Vaffals; and where the People share in the government without confu-

THE house of Lords and that of the Commons divide the legislative power E 3 under

under the King, but the Romans had no fuch balance. The Patricians and Plebeians in Rome were perpetually at variance, and there was no intermediate Power to reconcile them. The Roman Senate who were fo unjustly, fo criminally proud, as not to fuffer the Plebeians to share with them in any thing, cou'd find no other artifice to keep the latter out of the Administration than by employing them in foreign wars. They confider'd the Plebeians as a wild beaft, whom it behov'd them to let loofe upon their neighbours, for fear they should deyour their masters. Thus the greatest defect in the Government of the Romans rais'd 'em to be Conquerors. By being unhappy at home, they triumph'd over, and posses'd themselves of the world, till at last their divisions sunk them to Slavery.

THE government of England will never rise to so exalted a pitch of glory, nor will its end be so fatal. The English are not fir'd with the splendid folly of making conquests, but would only prevent their neighbours from conquering.

They

the English Nation. 55

They are not only jealous of their own Liberty, but even of that of other nations. The English were exasperated against Lewis the Fourteenth, for no other reason but because he was ambitious; and declar'd war against him merely out of levity, not from any interested motives.

THE English have doubtless purchas'd their Liberties at a very high price, and waded thro' seas of blood to drown the Idol of arbitrary Power. Other nations have been involv'd in as great calamities, and have shed as much blood; but then the blood they spilt in defence of their Liberties, only enslaved them the more.

THAT which rifes to a Revolution in England is no more than a Sedition in other countries. A city in Spain, in Barbary, or in Turkey, takes up arms in defence of its Privileges, when immediately 'tis storm'd by mercenary Troops, 'tis punish'd by Executioners, and the rest of the Nation kiss the chains they are loaded with. The French are of opinion, that the government of this Island

E 4

is more tempestuous than the sea which surrounds it, which indeed is true; but then 'tis never so but when the King raises the storm; when he attempts to seize the Ship of which he is only the chief Pilot. The civil wars of France lasted longer; were more cruel, and productive of greater evils than those of England: But none of these civil Wars had a wise and prudent Liberty for their

object.

In the detestable Reigns of Charles the ninth, and Henry the third, the whole affair was only whether the people should be slaves to the Guises. With regard to the last war of Paris, it deserves only to be hooted at. Methinks I fee a a croud of School-boys rifing up in arms against their Master, and afterwards whipp'd for it. Cardinal de Retz, who was witty and brave, but to no purpose; rebellious without a cause; factious without defign, and head of a defenceless Party, caball'd for caballing sake, and feem'd to foment the civil War merely out of diversion. The Parliament

ment did not know what he intended, nor what he did not intend. He levied troops by act of Parliament, and the next moment cashier'd them. He threatned, he begg'd pardon; he set a price upon Cardinal Mazarine's head, and afterwards congratulated him in a public manner. Our civil wars under Charles the sixth were bloody and cruel, those of the League execrable, and that of the * Frondeurs ridiculous.

THAT for which the French chiefly reproach the English Nation, is, the murther of King Charles the First, whom his subjects treated exactly as he wou'd have treated them, had his Reign been prosperous. After all, consider on one side, Charles the first defeated in a pitch'd battle, imprison'd, try'd, sentenc'd to die in Westminster-hall, and then beheaded: And on the other, the Emperor Henry the seventh, poison'd by

^{*} Frondeurs, in its proper sense Slingers, and figuratively Cavillers, or lovers of contradiction; was a name given to a league or party that oppos'd the French ministry, i.e. Cardinal Mazarine in 1648. See Rochifault's Memoirs.

his chaplain at his receiving the facrament; Henry the third stabb'd by a Monk; thirty affassinations projected against Henry the fourth; several of them put in execution, and the last bereaving that great Monarch of his life. Weigh, I say, all these wicked attempts, and then judge.



LETTER IX.

LETTER IX.

ONTHE

GOVERNMENT.

vernment, that harmony between King, Lords and Commons, did not always fubfift. England was enflav'd for a long feries of years by the Romans, the Saxons, the Danes, and the French fucceffively. William the conqueror particularly rul'd them with a rod of iron. He dispos'd as absolutely of the lives and fortunes of his conquer'd subjects as an eastern Monarch; and forbid, upon pain of death, the English both fire or candle in their houses after eight a clock; whether he did this to prevent their

their nocturnal meetings, or only to try, by this odd and whimfical prohibition, how far it was possible for one Man to extend his power over his fellow Creatures. 'Tis true indeed that the English had Parliaments before and after William the Conqueror; and they boast of them, as tho' these assemblies then call'd Parliaments, compos'd of ecclefiastical Tyrants, and of plunderers entitled Barons, had been the guardians of the pub-

lick liberty and happiness.

THE Barbarians who came from the shores of the Baltick, and settled in the rest of Europe, brought with them the form of government call'd States or Parliaments, about which fo much noise is made, and which are fo little understood. Kings indeed were not absolute in those days, but then the people were more wretched upon that very account, and more completely enflav'd. The Chiefs of these savages who had laid waste France, Italy, Spain and England, made themselves Monarchs. Their generals divided among themselves the several countries they had conquer'd, whence fprung thofe

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those Margraves, those Peers, those Barons, those petty Tyrants, who often contested with their Sovereigns for the fpoils of whole nations. These were birds of prey, fighting with an Eagle for Doves, whose blood the Victorious was to fuck. Every nation, instead of being govern'd by one Master, was trampled upon by an hundred Tyrants. The priests foon play'd a part among them. Before this, it had been the fate of the Gauls, the Germans and the Britons, to be always govern'd by their Druids, and the Chiefs of their villages, an ancient kind of Barons, not fo tyrannical as their fuccef-These Druids pretended to be mefors. diators between God and man. enacted laws, they fulminated their excommunications, and fentenc'd to death. The Bishops succeeded, by insensible degrees, to their temporal authority in the Goth and Vandal government. The Popes fet themselves at their head, and arm'd with their Briefs, their Bulls, and reinforc'd by Monks, they made even Kings tremble; depos'd and affaffinated them at pleasure, and employ'd every

every artifice to draw into their own purses, monies from all parts of Europe. The weak Ina, one of the tyrants of the Saxon Heptarchy in England, was the first Monarch that submitted, in his pilgrimage to Rome, to pay St. Peter's penny (equivalent very near to a French crown) for every house in his dominions. The whole Island foon follow'd his example; England became infenfibly one of the Pope's provinces, and the holy Father us'd to fend from time to time his Legates thither to levy exorbitant taxes. At last King John deliver'd up by a public instrument, the Kingdom of England to the Pope, who had excommunicated him; but the Barons not finding their account in this refignation, dethron'd the wretched King John and feated Lewis, father to St. Lewis King of France in his place. However they were foon weary of their new Monarch, and accordingly oblig'd him to return back to France.

WHILST that the Barons, the Bishops, and the Popes, all laid waste England, where all were for ruling; the most nu-

merous

merous, the most useful, even the most virtuous, and confequently the most venerable part of mankind, confifting of those who study the laws and the sciences; of traders, of artificers, in a word, of all who were not tyrants; that is, those who are call'd the people; thefe, I fay, were by them look'd upon as fo many animals beneath the dignity of the human species. The Commons in those ages were far from sharing in the government, they being Villains or Peafants whose labour, whose blood were the property of their Masters who entitled themselves the Nobility. The major part of men in Europe were at that time what they are to this day in feveral parts of the world, they were Villains or Bondsmen of Lords, that is, a kind of cattle bought and fold with the land. Many ages past away before justice cou'd be done to human nature; before mankind were conscious, that 'twas abominable numbers should fow, and but few reap: And was not France very happy, when the power and authority of those petty Robbers was abolish'd by the law64 LETTERS concerning ful authority of Kings and of the People?

HAPPILY in the violent shocks which the divisions between Kings and the Nobles gave to empires, the chains of Nations were more or less heavy. Liberty, in England, sprung from the quarrels of Tyrants. The Barons forc'd King John and King Henry the third, to grant the famous Magna Charta, the chief defign of which was indeed to make Kings dependant on the Lords, but then the rest of the nation were a little favour'd in it, in order that they might join, on proper occasions, with their pretended Masters. This great Charter which is confider'd as the facred origin of the English Liberties, shews in it felf how little Liberty was known.

THE Title alone proves, that the King thought he had a just right to be absolute; and that the Barons, and even the Clergy forc'd him to give up the pretended right, for no other reason but because they were the most powerful.

MAGNA CHARTA begins in this stile, We grant, of our own free will, the following

the English Nation.

lowing Privileges to the Archbishops, Bishops, Priors and Barons of our Kingdom. &cc.

THE House of Commons is not once mention'd in the Articles of this Charter, a Proof that it did not yet exist, or that it existed without Power, Mention is therein made, by name, of the Freemen of England, a melancholy Proof that some were not so. It appears by the thirty fecond Article, that these pretended Freemen ow'd Service to their Lords. Such a Liberty as this, was not many removes from Slavery.

By article XXI, the King ordains that his Officers shall not henceforward seize upon, unless they pay for them, the Horses and Carts of Freemen. The People confider'd this Ordinance as a real Liberty, tho' it was a greater Tyranny. Henry the feventh, that happy Usurper and great Politician, who pretended to love the Barons, tho' he in reality hated and fear'd them, got their Lands alienated. By this means the Villains, afterwards acquiring Riches by their Industry, purchas'd the Estates and Country-Seats

Seats of the illustrious Peers who had ruin'd themselves by their Folly and Extravagance, and all the Lands got by infensible Degrees into other Hands.

THE Power of the House of Commons increas'd every Day. The Families of the ancient Peers were at last extinct; and as Peers only are properly noble in England, there would be no such thing in strictness of Law, as Nobility in that Island, had not the Kings created new Barons from Time to Time, and preserv'd the Body of Peers, once a Terror to them, to oppose them to the Commons since become so formidable.

ALL these new Peers who compose the higher House, receive nothing but their Titles from the King, and very sew of them have Estates in those Places whence they take their Titles. One shall be Duke of D— tho' he has not a Foot of Land in Dorsetshire; and another is Earl of a Village, tho' he scarce knows where it is situated. The Peers have Power, but 'tis only in the Parliament House.

* haute, moyenne, & basse justice, that is, a Power to judge in all Matters civil and criminal; nor a Right or Privilege of Hunting in the Grounds of a Citizen, who at the same time is not permitted to fire a Gun in his own Field.

No one is exempted in this Country from paying certain Taxes, because he is a Nobleman or a Priest. All Duties and Taxes are settled by the House of Commons, whose Power is greater than that of the Peers, tho' inferiour to it in dignity. The spiritual as well as temporal Lords have the Liberty to reject a Money Bill brought in by the Commons, but they are not allow'd to alter any thing in it, and must either pass or throw it out without Restriction. When the Bill has pass'd the Lords

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^{*} La baute justice, is that of a Lord, who has Power to fentence capitally, and to judge of all Causes civil and criminal, those of the Crown excepted. La moyenne justice, is empower'd to judge of Actions relating to Guardianships, and Offences. La basse justice takes Cognizance of the Fees due to the Lord, of the Havock of Beasts, and of Offences. The moyenne justice is imaginary, and there is perhaps no Instance of its ever being put in Execution.

and is fign'd by the King, then the whole Nation pays, every Man in proportion to his Revenue or Estate, not according to his Title, which would be absurd. There is no such thing as an arbitrary Subsidy or Poll-Tax, but a real Tax on the Lands, of all which an Estimate was made in the Reign of the samous King William the Third.

THE Land-Tax continues fill upon the same foot, tho' the Revenue of the Lands is increas'd. Thus no one is tyranniz'd over, and every one is eafy. The Feet of the Peafants are not bruis'd by wooden Shoes; they eat white Bread, are well cloath'd, and are not afraid of increasing their Stock of Cattle, nor of tiling their Houses, from any Apprehenfions that their Taxes will be rais'd the Year following. The annual Income of the Estates of a great many Commoners in England, amounts to two hundred thousand Livres; and yet these don't think it beneath them to plough the Lands which enrich them, and on which they enjoy their Liberty.

LETTER X.

ON

TRADE.

S Trade enrich'd the Citizens in England, fo it contributed to their Freedom, and this Freedom on the other Side extended their Commerce, whence arose the Grandeur of the State. Trade rais'd by infenfible Degrees the naval Power, which gives the English a Superiority over the Seas, and they now are Masters of very near two hundred Ships of War. Posterity will very possibly be surpriz'd to hear that an Island whose only Produce is a little Lead, Tin, Fuller's Earth, and coarfe Wool, should become fo powerful by its Commerce, as to be able to fend in 1723, three F 3

Fleets at the same Time to three different and far distanc'd Parts of the Globe. One before Gibraltar, conquer'd and still posses'd by the English; a second to Porto Bello, to disposses the King of Spain of the Treasures of the West-Indies; and a third into the Baltick, to prevent the Northern Powers

from coming to an Engagement.

AT the Time when Lewis XIV made all Italy tremble, and that his Armies, which had already poffess'd themselves of Savoy and Piedmont, were upon the Point of taking Turin; Prince Eugene was oblig'd to march from the Middle of Germany in order to fuccour Savoy. Having no Money, without which Cities cannot be either taken or defended, he address'd himself to some English Merchants. These, at an Hour and half's Warning, lent him five Millions, whereby he was enabled to deliver Turin, and to beat the French; after which he wrote the following fhort Letter to the Persons who had disburs'd him the abovemention'd Sums: "Gentlemen, I have receiv'd your Mo-" ney,

" ney, and flatter my felf that I have " laid it out to your Satisfaction." Such a Circumstance as this raises a just Pride in an English Merchant, and makes him presume (not without some Reason) to compare himself to a Roman Citizen; and indeed a Peer's Brother does not think Traffic beneath him. When the Lord Townshend was Minister of State, . a Brother of his was content to be a City Merchant; and at the Time that the Earl of Oxford govern'd Great-Britain, his younger Brother was no more than a Factor in Aleppo, where he chose to live, and where he died. This Custom, which begins however to be laid afide, appears monstruous to Germans, vainly puff'd up with their Extraction. These think it morally impossible that the Son of an English Peer should be no more than a rich and powerful Citizens, for all are Princes in Germany. There have been thirty Highnesses of the same Name, all whose Patrimony consisted only in their Escutcheons and their Pride.

In France the Title of Marquis is given gratis to any one who will accept

of it; and whosoever arrives at Paris from the midst of the most remote Provinces with Money in his Purfe, and a Name terminating in ac or ille, may strut about, and cry, Such a Man as I! A Man of my Rank and Figure! And may look down upon a Trader with fovereign Contempt; whilft the Trader on the other Side, by thus often hearing his Profession treated so disdainfully, is Fool enough to blush at it. However, I need not fay which is most useful to a Nation; a Lord, powder'd in the tip of the Mode, who knows exactly at what a Clock the King rifes and goes to bed; and who gives himself Airs of Grandeur and State, at the fame Time that he is acting the Slave in the Anti-chamber of a prime Minister; or a Merchant, who enriches his Country, dispatches Orders from his Compting-House to Surat and Grand Cairo, and contributes to the Felicity of the World.

LETTER XI.

ON

INOCULATION.

T is inadvertently affirm'd in the Christian Countries of Europe, that the English are Fools and Madmen. Fools, because they give their Children the Small-Pox to prevent their catching it; and Mad-men, because they wantonly communicate a certain and dreadful Distemper to their Children, merely to prevent an uncertain Evil. The English, on the other Side, call the rest of the Europeans cowardly and unnatural. Cowardly, because they are afraid of putting their Children to a little Pain; unnatural, because they expose them to die

die one Time or other of the Small-Pox. But that the Reader may be able to judge, whether the English or those who differ from them in opinion, are in the right, here follows the History of the fam'd Inoculation, which is mention'd with so much Dread in France.

THE Circassian Women have, from Time immemorial, communicated the Small-Pox to their Children when not above fix Months old, by making an Incision in the arm, and by putting into this Incision a Pustle, taken carefully from the Body of another Child. This Puftle produces the same Effect in the arm it is laid in, as Yest in a Piece of Dough: It ferments, and diffuses through the whole Mass of Blood, the Qualities with which it is impregnated. The Puftles of the Child, in whom the artificial Small-Pox has been thus inoculated, are employ'd to communicate the fame Distemper to others. There is an almost perpetual Circulation of it in Circassia; and when unhappily the Small-Pox has quite left the Country, the In**habitants**

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habitants of it are in as great Trouble and Perplexity, as other Nations when their Harvest has fallen short.

THE Circumstance that introduc'd a Custom in Circassia, which appears so fingular to others, is nevertheless a Cause common to all Nations, I mean maternal Tenderness and Interest.

THE Circassians are poor, and their Daughters are beautiful, and indeed 'tis in them they chiefly trade. They furnish with Beauties, the Seraglios of the Turkish Sultan, of the Persian Sophy, and of all those who are wealthy enough to purchase and maintain such precious Merchandize. These Maidens are very honourably and virtuously instructed to fondle and caress Men; are taught Dances of a very polite and effeminate kind; and how to heighten by the most voluptuous Artifices, the Pleafures of their disdainful Masters for whom they are defign'd. These unhappy Creatures repeat their Leffon to their Mothers, in the fame manner as little Girls among us repeat their Catechism, without understanding one Word they fay. Now

Now it often happen'd, that after a Father and Mother had taken the utmost Care of the Education of their Children, they were frustrated of all their Hopes in an Instant. The Small-Pox getting into the Family, one Daughter died of it, another lost an Eye, a third had a great Nose at her Recovery, and the unhappy Parents were completely ruin'd. Even frequently, when the Small-Pox became epidemical, Trade was suspended for several Years, which thinn'd very considerably the Seraglios of Persia and Turkey.

A TRADING Nation is always watchful over its own Interests, and grasps at every Discovery that may be of Advantage to its Commerce. The Circassians observ'd, that scarce one Person in a Thousand was ever attack'd by a Small Pox of a violent kind. That some indeed had this Distemper very savourably three or four Times, but never twice so as to prove satal; in a Word, that no one ever had it in a violent Degree twice in his Life. They observ'd farther, that when the Small-Pox is of the milder

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milder Sort, and the Pustles have only a tender, delicate Skin to break thro', they never leave the least Scar in the Face. From these natural Observations they concluded, that in case an Infant of six Months or a Year old, should have a milder Sort of Small-Pox, he wou'd not die of it, would not be mark'd, nor be ever afflicted with it again.

In order therefore to preserve the Life and Beauty of their Children, the only Thing remaining was, to give them the Small-Pox in their infant Years. This they did, by inoculating in the Body of a Child, a Pustle taken from the most regular, and at the same Time the most favourable Sort of Small-Pox that could be procur'd.

THE Experiment cou'd not possibly fail. The Turks, who are People of good Sense, soon adopted this Custom, insomuch that at this Time there is not a Bassa in Constantinople, but communicates the Small-Pox to his Children of both Sexes, immediately upon their being wean'd.

SOME

Some pretend, that the Circaspians borrow'd this Custom anciently from the Arabians; but we shall leave the clearing up of this Point of History to fome learned Benedictine, who will not fail to compile a great many Folio's on this Subject, with the feveral Proofs or Authorities. All I have to fay upon it, is, that in the beginning of the Reign of King George the First, the Lady Wortley Mountague, a Woman of as fine a Genius, and endu'd with as great a Strength of Mind, as any of her Sex in the British Kingdoms, being with her Husband who was Ambassador at the Port, made no scruple to communicate the Small-Pox to an Infant of which she was deliver'd in Constantinople. The Chaplain represented to his Lady, but to no purpose, that this was an unchristian Operation, and therefore that it cou'd fucceed with none but Infidels. However, it had the most happy Effect upon the Son of the Lady Wortley Mountague, who, at her Return to England, communicated the Experiment to the Princess of Wales, now

now Queen of England. It must be confess'd that this Princess, abstracted from her Crown and Titles, was born to encourage the whole Circle of Arts, and to do good to Mankind. She appears as an amiable Philosopher on the Throne, having never let slip one Opportunity of improving the great Talents she receiv'd from Nature, nor of exerting her Beneficence. 'Tis she, who being inform'd that a Daughter of Milton was living, but in miserable Circumstances, immediately sent her a confiderable Present. 'Tis she who protects the learned Father Courager. 'Tis she who condescended to attempt a Reconciliation between Dr. Clark and Mr. Leibnitz. The Moment this Princess heard of Inoculation, she caus'd an Experiment of it to be made on four Criminals fentenc'd to die, and by that means preferv'd their Lives doubly; for she not only sav'd them from the Gallows, but by means of this artificial Small-Pox, prevented their ever having that Distemper in a natural Way, with which they would very probably

THE Princess being affur'd of the Usefulness of this Operation, caus'd her own Children to be inoculated. A great Part of the Kingdom follow'd her Example, and fince that Time ten thousand Children, at least, of Persons of Condition owe in this Manner their Lives to her Majesty, and to the Lady Wortley Mountague; and as many of the Fair Sex are oblig'd to them for their Beauty.

Upon a general Calculation, threefcore Persons in every hundred have the Small-Pox. Of these threescore, twenty die of it in the most favourable Season of Life, and as many more wear the difagreeable Remains of it in their Faces fo long as they live. Thus, a fifth Part of Mankind either die, or are disfigur'd by this Distemper. But it does not prove fatal to fo much as one, among those who are inoculated in Turkey or in England, unless the Patient be infirm, or would have died had not the Experiment ment been made upon him. Besides, no one is dissigur'd, no one has the Small-Pox a second Time, if the Inoculation was perfect. 'Tis therefore certain, that had the Lady of some French Ambassador brought this Secret from Constantinople to Paris, the Nation would have been for ever oblig'd to her. Then the Duke de Villequier, Father to the Duke d' Aumont, who enjoys the most vigorous Constitution, and is the healthiest Man in France, would not have been cut off in the Flower of his Age.

THE Prince of Soubise, happy in the finest Flush of Health, would not have been snatch'd away at five and twenty; nor the Dauphin, Grandsather to Lewis the Fisteenth, have been laid in his Grave in his sistieth Year. Twenty thousand Persons whom the Small-Pox swept away at Paris in 1723, would have been alive at this Time. But are not the French fond of Life, and is Beauty so inconsiderable an Advantage as to be disregarded by the Ladies! It must be confess'd that we are an odd kind of People. Perhaps our Nation will imitate, ten Years

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hence,

hence, this Practice of the English, if the Clergy and the Physicians will but give them Leave to do it: Or possibly our Country Men may introduce Inoculation three Months hence in France out of mere whim, in case the English should discontinue it thro' Fickleness.

I AM inform'd that the Chinese have practis'd Inoculation these hundred Years, a Circumstance that argues very much in its Favour, since they are thought to be the wisest and best govern'd People in the World. The Chinese indeed don't communicate this Distemper by Inoculation, but at the Nose, in the same Manner as we take Snuff. This is a more agreeable way, but then it produces the like Essects; and proves at the same Time, that had Inoculation been practis'd in France, 'twould have sav'd the Lives of Thousands.

LETTER XII.

ONTHE

LORD BACON.

OT long fince, the trite and frivolous Question following was debated in a very polite and learned Company, viz. who was the greatest Man, Casar, Alexander, Tamerlane, Cromwell, &c.

Some Body answer'd, that Sir Isaac Newton excell'd them all. The Gentleman's Affertion was very just; for if true Greatness confists in having receiv'd from Heaven a mighty Genius, and in having employ'd it to enlighten our own Minds and that of others; a Man like Sir Isaac Newton, whose equal is G 2 hardly

hardly found in a thousand Years, is the truly great Man. And those Politicians and Conquerors, (and all ages produce fome) were generally fo many illustrious wicked Men. That Man claims our Respect, who commands over the Minds of the rest of the World by the Force of Truth, not those who enslave their Fellow Creatures; He who is acquainted with the Universe, not They who deface it.

SINCE therefore you defire me to give you an Account of the famous Personages which England has given birth to, I shall begin with Lord Bacon, Mr. Locke, Sir Isaac Newton, &c. Afterwards the Warriors and Ministers of State shall come in their order.

I must begin with the celebrated Vifcount Verulam, known in Europe by the Name of Bacon, which was that of his Family. His Father had been Lord Keeper, and himself was a great many Years Lord Chancellor under King James the First. Nevertheless, amidst the Intrigues of a Court, and the Affairs of his exalted Employment, which alone were

enough

enough to engross his whole Time, he yet found fo much Leisure for Study, as to make himself a great Philosopher, a good Historian, and an elegant Writer; and a still more furprizing Circumstance is, that he liv'd in an Age in which the Art of writing justly and elegantly was little known, much less true Philosophy. Lord Bacon, as is the Fate of Man, was more esteem'd after his Death than in his Life-time. His Enemies were in the British Court, and his Admirers were Foreigners.

WHEN the Marquis d'Effiat attended in England upon the Princess Henrietta Maria, Daughter to Henry the Fourth, whom King Charles the First had married, that Minister went and visited the Lord Bacon, who being at that Time fick in his Bed, receiv'd him with the Cartains shut close. You refemble the Angels, fays the Marquis to him; we hear those Beings spoken of perpetually, and we believe them fuperiour to Men, but are never allow'd the Consolation to see them.

You know that this great Man was accus'd of a Crime very unbecoming a Philosopher, I mean Bribery and Extortion. You know that he was fentenc'd by the House of Lords, to pay a Fine of about four hundred thousand French Livres; to lose his Peerage and his Dignity of Chancellor. But in the prefent Age, the English revere his Memory to fuch a Degree, that they will scarce allow him to have been guilty. In case you should ask what are my Thoughts on this Head, I shall answer you in the Words which I heard the Lord Bolingbroke use on another Occafion. Several Gentlemen were speaking, in his Company, of the Avarice with which the late Duke of Marlborough had been charg'd, fome Examples whereof being given, the Lord Bolingbroke was appeal'd to, (who having been in the opposite Party, might perhaps, without the Imputation of Indecency, have been allow'd to clear up that Matter:) "He was fo great a Man, replied his Lordship, that I have forgot his « Vices."

ISHALL

I SHALL therefore confine my felf to those Things which so justly gain'd Lord Bacon the Esteem of all Europe.

THE most singular, and the best of all his Pieces, is that which, at this Time, is the most useless and the least read, I mean his Novum Scientiarum Organum. This is the Scaffold with which the new Philosophy was rais'd; and when the Edifice was built, Part of it at least, the Scaffold was no longer of Service.

THE Lord Bacon was not yet acquainted with Nature, but then he knew, and pointed out, the feveral Paths that lead to it. He had defpis'd in his younger Years the Thing call'd Philophy in the Universities; and did all that lay in his Power to prevent those Societies of Men, instituted to improve human Reason, from depraving it by their Quiddities, their Horrors of the Vacuum, their substantial Forms, and all those impertinent Terms which not only Ignorance had rendred venerable, but which had been made sacred, by their being ridiculously blended with Religion.

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HE is the Father of experimental Philosophy. It must indeed be confess'd, that very furprizing Secrets had been found out before his Time. The Sea-Compass, Printing, engraving on Copper Plates, Oil-Painting, Looking-Glafses; the Art of restoring, in some Meafure, old Men to their Sight by Spectacles; Gun-Powder, &c. had been discover'd. A new World had been fought for, found, and conquer'd. Would not one suppose that these sublime Discoveries had been made by the greatest Philofophers, and in Ages much more enlightened than the present? But 'twas far otherwise; all these great Changes happen'd in the most stupid and barbarous Times. Chance only gave Birth to most of those Inventions; and 'tis very probable that what is call'd Chance, contributed very much to the Discovery of America; at least it has been always thought, that Christopher Columbus undertook his Voyage, merely on the Relation of a Captain of a Ship, which a Storm had drove as far Westward as the Caribee Islands. Be this as it will, Men had

had fail'd round the World, and cou'd destroy Cities by an artificial Thunder more dreadful than the real one: But, then they were not acquainted with the Circulation of the Blood, the Weight of the Air, the Laws of Motion, Light, the Number of our Planets, &c. And a Man who maintain'd a Thesis on Aristotle's Categories; on the universals a

THE most astonishing, the most useful Inventions, are not those which reslect the greatest Honour on the human Mind. 'Tis to a mechanical Instinct, which is found in many Men, and not to true Philosophy, that most Arts owe their

parte rei, or fuch like Nonsense, was

look'd upon as a Prodigy.

Origin.

THE Discovery of Fire, the Art of making Bread, of melting and preparing Metals, of building Houses, and the Invention of the Shuttle, are infinitely more beneficial to Mankind than Printing or the Sea-Compass: And yet these Arts were invented by uncultivated, savage Men.

WHAT

WHAT a prodigious use the Greeks and Romans made afterwards of Mechanicks! Nevertheless, they believ'd that there were crystal Heavens; that the Stars were small Lamps which sometimes fell into the Sea; and one of their greatest Philosophers, after long Refearches, sound that the Stars were so many Flints which had been detach'd from the Earth.

In a Word, no one, before the Lord Bacon, was acquainted with experimental Philosophy, nor with the feveral physical Experiments which have been made fince his Time. Scarce one of them but is hinted at in his Work, and he himself had made several. He made a kind of pneumatic Engine, by which he guess'd the elasticity of the Air. He approach'd, on all Sides as it were, to the Discovery of its Weight, and had very near attain'd it, but some Time after Toricelli feiz'd upon this Truth. In a little Time experimental Philosophy began to be cultivated on a fudden in most Parts of Europe. 'Twas a hidden Treasure which the Lord Bacon had fome No-

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tion of, and which all the Philosophers, encourag'd by his Promises, endeavour'd

to dig up.

But that which furpriz'd me most was to read in his Work, in express Terms, the new Attraction, the Invention of which is ascrib'd to Sir Isaac Newton.

WE must search, says Lord Bacon, whether there may not be a kind of magnetic Power, which operates between the Earth and heavy Bodies, between the Moon and the Ocean, between the Planets, &c. In another Place he fays, either heavy Bodies must be carried towards the Center of the Earth, or must be reciprocally attracted by it; and in the latter Case 'tis evident, that the nearer Bodies, in their falling, draw towards the Earth, the stronger they will attract one another. We must, says he, make an Experiment to fee whether the the fame Clock will go faster on the Top of a Mountain or at the Bottom of a Mine. Whether the Strength of the Weights decreases on the Mountain, and increases in the Mine. 'Tis probable probable that the Earth has a true attractive Power.

This Fore-runner in Philosophy was also an elegant Writer, an Historian and a Wit.

His moral Effays are greatly efteem'd, but they were drawn up in the View of instructing rather than of pleasing: And as they are not a Satyr upon Mankind, like Rochefoucaults's Maxims, nor written upon a sceptical Plan, like Montagne's Essays, they are not so much read as those two ingenious Authors.

His History of Henry the Seventh was look'd upon as a Master-Piece, but how is it possible that some Persons can presume to compare so little a Work with the History of our illustrious Thuanus?

Speaking about the famous Impoflor Perkin, Son to a converted * few, who affum'd boldly the Name and Title of Richard the Fourth, King of England, at the Instigation of the Duchess of Burgundy; and who disputed the the ENGLISH NATION. 93 Crown with Henry the Seventh, the Lord Bacon writes as follows:

"AT this Time the King began again to be haunted with Sprites, by the Magick and curious Arts of the

" Lady Margaret; who raised up the

" Ghost of Richard Duke of York, se-

" cond Son to King Edward the Fourth,

" to walk and vex the King." *

" AFTER such Time as she (Marga-

" kin Warbeck) was perfect in his Leffon, she began to cast with her self

" from what Coast this Blazing-Starre

" should first appear, and at what Time

" it must be upon the Horizon of Ire-

" land; for there had the like Meteor

" ftrong Influence before." +

METHINKS our fagacious Thuanus does not give into fuch Fustian, which formerly was look'd upon as Sublime, but in this Age is justly call'd Nonsense.

LETTER

^{*} The History of the Reign of King Henry the Seventh.

**Page 112. London, printed in 1641. Folio.

† Idem. p. 116.

LETTER XIII.

ON

Mr. LOCKE.

ERHAPS no Man ever had a more judicious or more methodical Genius, or was a more acute Logician than Mr. Locke, and yet he was not deeply skill'd in the Mathematicks. This great Man could never subject himself to the tedious Fatigue of Calculations, nor to the dry Pursuit of Mathematical Truths, which do not at first present any fenfible Objects to the Mind; and no one has given better Proofs than he, that 'tis possible for a Man to have a geometrical Head without the Affistance of Geometry. Before his Time, feveral great Philosophers had declar'd, in

the most positive Terms, what the Soul of Man is; but as these absolutely knew nothing about it, they might very well be allow'd to differ entirely in opinion from one another.

In Greece, the infant Seat of Arts and of Errors, and where the Grandeur as well as Folly of the human Mind went fuch prodigious Lengths, the People us'd to reason about the Soul in the very fame Manner as we do.

THE divine Anaxagoras, in whose Honour an Altar was erected, for his having taught Mankind that the Sun was greater than Peloponnesus, that Snow was black, and that the Heavens were of Stone; affirm'd that the Soul was an aerial Spirit, but at the fame Time immortal. Diogenes, (not he who was a cynical Philosopher after having coyn'd base Money) declar'd that the Soul was a Portion of the Substance of God; an Idea which we must confess was very fublime. Epicurus maintain'd that it was compos'd of Parts in the same Manner as the Body.

ARISTOTLE who has been explain'd a thousand Ways, because he is unintelligible, was of Opinion, according to some of his Disciples, that the Understanding in all Men is one and the same Substance.

THE divine Plato, Master of the divine Aristotle, and the divine Socrates Master of the divine Plato, us'd to say that the Soul was corporeal and eternal. No doubt but the Demon of Socrates had instructed him in the Nature of it. Some People, indeed, pretend, that a Man who boasted his being attended by a familiar Genius, must infallibly be either a Knave or a Madman, but this kind of People are seldom satisfied with any Thing but Reason.

WITH regard to the Fathers of the Church, several in the primitive Ages believ'd that the Soul was human, and the Angels and God corporeal. Men naturally improve upon every System. St. Bernard, as Father Mabillon confesses, taught that the Soul after Death does not see God in the celestial Regions, but converses with Christ's human Na-

ture only. However, he was not believ'd this Time on his bare Word; the Adventure of the Crufade having a little funk the Credit of his Oracles. Afterwards a thousand Schoolmen arose, fuch as the irrefragable * Doctor, the fubtil Doctor +, the angelic Doctor +, the feraphic Doctor ||, and the cherubic Doctor, who were all fure that they had a very clear and distinct Idea of the Soul, and yet wrote in such a Manner, that one would conclude they were refolv'd no one should understand a Word in their Writings. Our Des Cartes, born to discover the Errors of Antiquity, and at the same Time to substitute his own; and hurried away by that systematic Spirit which throws a Cloud over the Minds of the greatest Men, thought he had demonstrated that the Soul is the fame Thing as Thought, in the fame Manner as Matter, in his Opinion, is the fame as Extension. He afferted, that Man thinks eternally, and that the

^{*} Alexander de Hales. † Duns Scotus. ‡ St. Thomas. | St. Bonaventure.

Soul, at its coming into the Body, is inform'd with the whole Series of metaphyfical Notions; knowing God, infinite Space, possessing all abstract Ideas; in a Word, completely endued with the most sublime Lights, which it unhappily forgets at its issuing from the Womb.

FATHER Malbranche, in his fublime Illusions, not only admitted innate Ideas, but did not doubt of our living wholly in God, and that God is, as it were, our Soul.

NUCH a Multitude of Reasoners having written the Romance of the Soul, a Sage at last arose, who gave, with an Air of the greatest Modesty, the History of it. Mr. Locke has display'd the human Soul, in the same Manner as an excellent Anatomist explains the Springs of the human Body. He every where takes the Light of Physicks for his Guide. He sometimes presumes to speak affirmatively, but then he presumes also to doubt. Instead of concluding at once what we know not, he examines gradually what we wou'd know.

know. He takes an Infant at the Instant of his Birth; he traces, Step by Step, the Progress of his Understanding; examines what Things he has in common with Beasts, and what he possesses above them. Above all he consults himself; the being conscious that he himself thinks.

I SHALL leave, fays he, to those who know more of this Matter than my self, the examining whether the Soul exists before or after the Organization of our Bodies. But I confess that 'tis my Lot to be animated with one of those heavy Souls which do not think always; and I am even so unhappy as not to conceive, that 'tis more necessary the Soul should think perpetually, than that Bodies shou'd be for ever in Motion.

WITH regard to my felf, I shall boast that I have the Honour to be as stupid in this Particular as Mr. Locke. No one shall ever make me believe, that I think always; and I am as little inclin'd as he cou'd be, to fancy that some Weeks after I was conceiv'd, I was a very learned Soul; knowing at that H 2

Time a thousand Things which I forgot at my Birth; and possessing when in the Womb, (tho' to no Manner of Purpose,) Knowledge which I lost the Instant I had occasion for it; and which I have never since been able to recover persectly.

MR. LOCKE after having destroy'd innate Ideas; after having fully renounc'd the Vanity of believing that we think always; after having laid down, from the most folid Principles, that Ideas enter the Mind through the Senses; having examin'd our fimple and complex Ideas; having trac'd the human Mind through its feveral Operations; having shew'd that all the Languages in the World are imperfect, and the great Abuse that is made of Words every Moment; he at last comes to consider the Extent or rather the narrow Limits of human Knowledge. 'Twas in this Chapter he prefum'd to advance, but very modestly, the following Words, "We " shall, perhaps, never be capable of "knowing, whether a Being, purely " material, thinks or not." This fage Affer-

Affertion was, by more Divines than one, look'd upon as a scandalous Declaration that the Soul is material and mortal. Some Englishmen, devout after their Way, founded an Alarm. The Superstitious are the same in Society as Cowards in an Army; they themselves are feiz'd with a panic Fear, and communicate it to others. 'Twas loudly exclaim'd, that Mr. Locke intended to destroy Religion; nevertheless, Religion had nothing to do in the Affair, it being a Question purely Philosophical, altogether independent on Faith and Revelation. Mr. Locke's Opponents needed but to examine, calmly and impartially, whether the declaring that Matter can think, implies a Contradiction; and whether God is able to communicate Thought to Matter. But Divines are too apt to begin their Declarations with faying, that God is offended when People differ from them in Opinion; in which they too much resemble the bad Poets, who us'd to declare publickly that Boileau spake irreverently of Lewis the Fourteenth, because he ridicul'd their stupid H 3

Productions. Bishop Stilling fleet got the Reputation of a calm and unprejudic'd Divine, because he did not expressly make use of injurious Terms in his Dispute with Mr. Locke. That Divine entred the Lists against him, but was defeated; for he argued as a Schoolman, and Locke as a Philosopher, who was perfectly acquainted with the strong as well as the weak Side of the human Mind. and who fought with Weapons whose Temper he knew. If I might prefume to give my Opinion on fo delicate a Subject after Mr. Locke, I would fay, that Men have long disputed on the Nature and the Immortality of the Soul. With regard to its Immortality, 'tis impossible to give a Demonstration of it. fince its Nature is still the Subject of Controversy; which however must be thoroughly understood, before a Person can be able to determine whether it be immortal or not. Human Reason is so little able, merely by its own Strength, to demonstrate the Immortality of the Soul, that 'twas absolutely necessary Religion should reveal it to us. 'Tis of Advantage

Advantage to Society in general, that Mankind should believe the Soul to be immortal; Faith commands us to do this; nothing more is requir'd, and the Matter is clear'd up at once. But 'tis otherwise with respect to its Nature; 'tis of little Importance to Religion, which only requires the Soul to be virtuous, what Substance it may be made of. 'Tis a Clock which is given us to regulate, but the Artist has not told us what Materials the Spring of this Clock is compos'd.

I am a Body and, I think, that's all I know of the Matter. Shall I ascribe to an unknown Cause, what I can so easily. impute to the only fecond Caufe I am acquainted with? Here all the School Philosophers interrupt me with their Arguments, and declare that there is only Extension and Solidity in Bodies, and that there they can have nothing but Motion and Figure. Now Motion, Figure, Extension and Solidity cannot form a Thought, and confequently the Soul cannot be Matter. All this, so often repeated, mighty Series of Reasoning, amounts HA

mounts to no more than this; I am abfolutely ignorant what Matter is; I guess, but imperfectly, some Properties of it; now, I absolutely cannot tell whether these Properties may be joyn'd to Thought. As I therefore know nothing, I maintain positively that Matter cannot think. In this Manner do the Schools reason.

Mr. Locke address'd these Gentlemen in the candid, sincere Manner following. At least confess your selves to be as ignorant as I. Neither your Imaginations nor mine are able to comprehend in what manner a Body is susceptible of Ideas; and do you conceive better in what manner a Substance, of what kind soever, is susceptible of them? As you cannot comprehend either Matter or Spirit, why will you presume to affert any thing?

The superstitious Man comes afterwards, and declares, that all those must be burnt for the Good of their Souls, who so much as suspect that 'tis possible for the Body to think without any foreign Assistance. But what would these People say should they themselves be prov'd irreligious? And indeed, what

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Man can prefume to affert, without being guilty at the same time of the greatest Impiety, that 'tis impossible for the Creator to form Matter with Thought and Senfation? Confider only, I beg you, what a Dilemma you bring yourfelves into; you who confine in this Manner the Power of the Creator. Beafts have the fame Organs, the fame Sensations, the same Perceptions as we; they have Memory, and combine certain Ideas. In case it was not in the Power of God to animate Matter, and inform it with Sensation, the Consequence would be, either that Beafts are mere Machines, or that they have a spiritual Soul.

METHINKS 'tis clearly evident that Beasts cannot be mere Machines, which I prove thus. God has given them the very same Organs of Sensation as to us: If therefore they have no Sensation, God has created a useless Thing; now according to your own Confession God does nothing in vain; he therefore did not create so many Organs of Sensation, merely for them to be uninform'd with this Faculty; consequently Beasts are

not mere Machines. Beafts, according to your Affertion, cannot be animated with a spiritual Soul; you will therefore, in fpight of your felf, be reduc'd to this only Affertion, viz. that God has endued the Organs of Beafts, who are mere Matter, with the Faculties of Sensation and Perception, which you call Instinct in them. But why may not God if he pleases, communicate to our more delicate Organs, that Faculty of feeling, perceiving, and thinking, which we call human Reason? To whatever Side you turn, you are forc'd to acknowledge your own Ignorance, and the boundless Power of the Creators Exclaim therefore no more against the fage, the modest Philosophy of Mr. Locke, which fo far from interfering with Religion, would be of use to demonstrate the Truth of it, in case Religion wanted any fuch Support. For what Philosophy can be of a more religious Nature than that, which affirming nothing but what it conceives clearly: and conscious of its own Weakness, declares that we must always have recourse

the English Nation. 107 to God in our examining of the first

Principles.

BESIDES, we must not be apprehensive, that any philosophical Opinion will ever prejudice the Religion of a Country. Tho' our Demonstrations clash directly with our Mysteries, that's nothing to the Purpose, for the latter are not less rever'd upon that Account by our Christian Philosophers, who know very well that the Objects of Reason and those of Faith are of a very different Nature. Philofophers will never form a religious Sect, the Reason of which is, their Writings are not calculated for the Vulgar, and they themselves are free from Enthusiasm. If we divide Mankind into twenty Parts, 'twill be found that nineteen of these confift of Persons employ'd in manual Labour, who will never know that fuch a Man as Mr. Locke existed. In the remaining twentieth Part how few are Readers? And among fuch as are fo, twenty amuse themselves with Romances to one who studies Philosophy. The thinking Part of Mankind are confin'd to a very small Number, and these will never never disturb the Peace and Tranquillity of the World.

NEITHER Montagne, Locke, Bayle, Spinoza, Hobbes, the Lord Shaftsbury, Collins nor Toland lighted up the Firebrand of Discord in their Countries; this has generally been the Work of Divines, who being at first puff'd up with the Ambition of becoming Chiefs of a Sect, soon grew very desirous of being at the Head of a Party. But what do I say? All the Works of the modern Philosophers put together will never make so much Noise as even the Dispute which arose among the Franciscans, merely about the Fashion of their Sleeves and of their Cowls.



LETTER XIV.

ON

DES CARTES

AND

Sir Isaac Newton.

A London, will find Philosophy, like every Thing else, very much chang'd there. He had left the World a plenum, and he now finds it a vacuum. At Paris the Universe is seen, compos'd of Vortices of subtile Matter; but nothing like it is seen in London. In France, 'tis the Pressure of the Moon that causes the Tides; but in England 'tis the Sea that gravitates

gravitates towards the Moon; fo that when you think that the Moon should make it Flood with us, those Gentlemen fancy it should be Ebb, which, very unluckily, cannot be prov'd. For to be able to do this, 'tis necessary the Moon and the Tides should have been enquir'd into, at the very instant of the Creation.

You'll observe farther, that the Sun, which in France is faid to have nothing to do in the Affair, comes in here for very near a quarter of its Affiftance. According to your Cartefians, every Thing is perform'd by an Impulsion, of which we have very little Notion; and according to Sir Isaac Newton, 'tis by an Attraction, the Cause of which is as much unknown to us. At Paris you imagine that the Earth is shap'd like a Melon, or of an oblique Figure; at London it has an oblate one. A Cartesian declares that Light exists in the Air; but a Newtonian afferts that it comes from the Sun in fix Minutes and a half. The feveral Operations of your Chymistry are perform'd by Acids, Alkalies

Alkalies and fubtile Matter; but Attraction prevails even in Chymistry among the English.

THE very Essence of Things is totally chang'd. You neither are agreed upon the Definition of the Soul, nor on that of Matter: Descartes, as I observ'd in my last, maintains that the Soul is the same Thing with Thought, and Mr. Locke has given a pretty good Proof of the contrary.

Descartes afferts farther, that Extension alone constitutes Matter, but Sir Isaac adds Solidity to it.

How furiously contradictory are these Opinions!

Non nostrum inter vos tantas componere lites. VIRGIL, Eclog. III.

*Tis not for us to end fuch great Disputes.

This famous Newton, this Destroyer of the Cartesian System, died in March Anno 1727. His Countrymen honour'd him in his Life-Time, and interr'd him

as tho' he had been a King who had

made his People happy.

THE English read with the highest Satisfaction, and translated into their Tongue, the Elogium of Sir Isaas Newton, which Mr. de Fontenelle, spoke in the Academy of Sciences. Mr. de Fontenelle presides as Judge over Philofophers; and the English expected his Decision, as a solemn Declaration of the Superiority of the English Philosophy over that of the French. But when 'twas found that this Gentleman had compar'd Des Cartes to Sir Isaac, the whole Royal Society in London rose up in Arms. So far from acquiescing with Mr. Fontenelle's Judgment, they criticis'd his Discourse. And even several (who however were not the ablest Philophers in that Body) were offended at the Comparison; and for no other Reason but because Des Cartes was a Frenchman.

IT must be confess'd that these two great Men differ'd very much in Conduct, in Fortune, and in Philosophy.

NATURE had indulg'd Des Cartes a shining and strong Imagination, whence he became a very singular Person both in private Life, and in his Manner of Reasoning. This Imagination could not conceal it self even in his philosophical Works, which are every where adorn'd with very shining, ingenious Metaphors and Figures. Nature had almost made him a Poet; and indeed he wrote a Piece of Poetry for the Entertainment of Christina Queen of Sweden, which however was suppress'd in Honour to his Memory.

HE embrac'd a Military Life for fome Time, and afterwards becoming a complete Philosopher, he did not think the Passion of Love derogatory to his Character. He had by his Mistress a Daughter call'd Froncine, who died young, and was very much regretted by him. Thus he experienc'd every Passion incident to Mankind.

HE was a long Time of Opinion, that it would be necessary for him to fly from the Society of his Fellow Creatures, and especially from his na-

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tive Country, in order to enjoy the Happiness of cultivating his philosophical Studies in full Liberty.

DES CARTES was very right, for his Cotemporaries were not knowing enough to improve and enlighten his Understanding, and were capable of little else

than of giving him Uneafiness.

HE left France purely to go in fearch of Truth, which was then persecuted by the wretched Philosophy of the Schools. However, he found that Reafon was as much difguis'd and deprav'd in the Universities of Holland, into which he withdrew, as in his own Country. For at the Time that the French condemn'd the only Propositions of his Philosophy which were true, he was perfecuted by the pretended Philofophers of Holland, who understood him no better; and who, having a nearer View of his Glory, hated his Perfon the more, fo that he was oblig'd to leave Utrecht. Des Cartes was injurioully accus'd of being an Atheist, the last Refuge of religious Scandal; And he who had employ'd all the Sagacity and Pene-

Penetration of his Genius, in fearching for new Proofs of the Existence of a God, was suspected to believe there was no such Being.

Such a Perfecution from all Sides. must necessarily suppose a most exalted Merit as well as a very diffinguish'd Reputation, and indeed he posses'd both. Reason at that Time darted a Ray upon the World thro' the Gloom of the Schools, and the Prejudices of popular Superstition. At last his Name spread fo univerfally, that the French were defirous of bringing him back into his native Country by Rewards, and accordingly offer'd him an annual Penfion of a thousand Crowns. Upon these Hopes Des Cartes return'd to France; paid the Fees of his Patent, which was fold at that Time, but no Pension was settled upon him. Thus disappointed, he return'd to his Solitude in North-Holland, where he again purfued the Study of Philosophy, whilst the great Galileo, at fourscore Years of Age, was groaning in the Prisons of the Inquisition, only for having demonstrated the Earth's Motion.

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AT last Des Cartes was snatch'd from the World in the Flower of his Age at Stockholm. His Death was owing to a bad Regimen, and he expir'd in the Midst of some Literati who were his Enemies, and under the Hands of a Physician to whom he was odious.

THE Progress of Sir Isaac Newton's Life was quite different. He liv'd happy, and very much honour'd in his native Country, to the Age of fourscore and five Years.

'Twas his peculiar Felicity, not only to be born in a Country of Liberty, but in an Age when all scholastic Impertinencies were banish'd from the World. Reason alone was cultivated, and Mankind cou'd only be his Pupil, not his Enemy.

ONE very fingular Difference in the Lives of these two great Men is, that Sir Isaac, during the long Course of Years, he enjoy'd was never sensible to any Passion, was not subject to the common Frailties of Mankind, nor ever had any Commerce with Women; a Circumstance which was assur'd me by the Physi-

Physician and Surgeon who attended him in his last Moments.

WE may admire Sir Isaac Newton on this Occasion, but then we must not censure Des Cartes.

THE Opinion that generally prevails in England with regard to these new Philosophers is, that the latter was a Dreamer, and the former a Sage.

VERY few People in England read Descartes, whose Works indeed are now useless. On the other Side, but a small Number peruse those of Sir Isaac, because to do this the Student must be deeply skill'd in the Mathematicks, otherwise those Works will be unintelligible to him. But notwithstanding this, these great Men are the Subject of every One's Discourse. Sir Isaac Newton is allow'd every Advantage, whilst Des Cartes is not indulg'd a fingle one. According to fome, 'tis to the former that we owe the Discovery of a Vacuum, that the Air is a heavy Body, and the Invention of Telescopes. In a Word, Sir Isaac Newton is here as the Hercules of fabulous Story, to whom the Ignorant

afcrib'd all the Feats of ancient Heroes.

In a Critique that was made in London on Mr. de Fontenelle's Discourse, the Writer presum'd to affert that Des Cartes was not a great Geometrician. Those who make such a Declaration may justly be reproach'd with flying in their Master's Face. Des Cartes extended the Limits of Geometry as far beyond the Place where he found them, as Sir Isaac did after him. The former first taught the Method of expreffing Curves by Equations. This Geometry which, Thanks to him for it, is now grown common, was fo abstrufe in his Time, that not fo much as one Professor would undertake to explain it; and Schotten in Holland, and Format in France, were the only Men who understood it.

HE applied this geometrical and inventive Genius to Dioptricks, which, when treated of by him, became a new Art. And if he was mistaken in some Things, the Reason of that is, a Man who discovers a new Tract of Land cannot

cannot at once know all the Properties of the Soil. Those who come after him, and make these Lands fruitful, are at least oblig'd to him for the Discovery. I will not deny but that there are innumerable Errors in the rest of Des Cartes's Works.

GEOMETRY was a Guide he himself had in some Measure fashion'd, which would have conducted him fafely thro' the feveral Paths of natural Philosophy. Nevertheless he at last abandon'd this Guide, and gave entirely into the Humour of forming Hypotheses; and then Philosophy was no more than an ingenious Romance, fit only to amuse the Ignorant. He was mistaken in the Nature of the Soul, in the Proofs of the Existence of a God, in Matter, in the Laws of Motion, and in the Nature of Light. He admitted innate Ideas, he invented new Elements, he created a World; he made Man according to his own Fancy; and 'tis justly faid, that the Man of Des Cartes is in Fact that of Des Cartes only, very different from the real one.

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HE push'd his metaphysical Errors fo far, as to declare that two and two make four, for no other Reason but because God would have it so. However, 'twill not be making him too great a Compliment if we affirm that he was valuable even in his Mistakes. He deceiv'd himself, but then it was at least in a methodical Way. He destroy'd all the abfurd Chimæra's with which Youth had been infatuated for two thousand Years. He taught his Cotemporaries how to reason, and enabled them to employ his own Weapons against himfelf. If Des Cartes did not pay in good Money, he however did great Service in crying down that of a base Alloy.

I INDEED believe, that very few will prefume to compare his Philosophy in any respect with that of Sir Isaac Newton. The former is an Essay, the latter a Master-Piece: But then the Man who first brought us to the Path of Truth, was perhaps as great a Genius as he who afterwards conducted us through it.

DES CARTES gave Sight to the Blind. These saw the Errors of Antiquity and

of the Sciences. The Path he struck out is since become boundless. Ro-hault's little Work was during some Years a complete System of Physicks; but now all the Transactions of the several Academies in Europe put together do not form so much as the Beginning of a System. In fathoming this Abyss no Bottom has been sound. We are now to examine what Discoveries Sir Isaac Newton has made in it.



LETTER

LETTER XV.

ON

ATTRACTION.

HE Discoveries which gain'd Sir Isaac Newton so universal a Reputation, relate to the System of the World, to Light, to Geometrical Infinites; and lastly to Chronology, with which he us'd to amuse himself after the Fatigue of his severer Studies.

I WILL now acquaint you (without Prolixity if possible) with the few Things I have been able to comprehend of all these sublime Ideas. With Regard to the System of our World, Disputes were a long Time maintain'd, on

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the Cause that turns the Planets, and keeps them in their Orbits; and on those Causes which make all Bodies here below descend towards the Surface of the Earth.

THE System of Des Cartes explain'd and improv'd since his Time, seem'd to give a plausible Reason for all those Phænomena; and this Reason seem'd more just, as 'tis simple, and intelligible to all Capacities. But in Philosophy, a Student ought to doubt of the Things he fancies he understands too easily, as much as of those he does not understand.

GRAVITY, the falling of accelerated Bodies on the Earth, the Revolution of the Planets in their Orbits, their Rotations round their Axis, all this is mere Motion. Now Motion can't perhaps be conceiv'd any otherwise than by Impulsion; therefore all those Bodies must be impelled. But by what are they impelled? All Space is full, it therefore is fill'd with a very subtile Matter, since this is imperceptible to

us; this Matter goes from West to East, fince all the Planets are carried from West to East. Thus from Hypothesis to Hypothesis, from one Appearance to another, Philosophers have imagin'd a vast Whirlpool of fubtile Matter, in which the Planets are carried round the Sun: They also have created another particular Vortex which floats in the great one, and which turns daily round the Planets. When all this is done, 'tis pretended that Gravity depends on this diurnal Motion; for, fay these, the Velocity of the fubtile Matter that turns round our little Vortex, must be seventeen Times more rapid than that of the Earth; or, in case its Velocity is seventeen Times greater than that of the Earth, its centrifugal Force must be vastly greater, and confequently impell all Bodies towards the Earth. This is the Caufe of Gravity, according to the Cartefian System. But the Theorist, before he calculated the centrifugal Force and Velocity of the fubtile Matter, should first

first have been certain that it existed.

SIR Isaac Newton seems to have deftroy'd all these great and little Vortices, both that which carries the Planets round the Sun, as well as the other which supposes every Planet to turn on its own Axis.

FIRST, with regard to the pretended little Vortex of the Earth, 'tis demonstrated that it must lose its Motion by insensible Degrees; 'tis demonstrated, that if the Earth swims in a Fluid, its Density must be equal to that of the Earth; and in case its Density be the same, all the Bodies we endeavour to move must meet with an insuperable Resistance.

WITH regard to the great Vortices, they are still more chimerical, and 'tis impossible to make them agree with Kepler's Law, the Truth of which has been demonstrated. Sir Isaac shows, that the Revolution of the Fluid in which Jupiter is supposed to be carried, is not the same with regard to the Revolution of the Fluid of the Earth,

as the Revolution of Jupiter with respect to that of the Earth. He proves, that as the Planets make their Revolutions in Elipsis's, and consequently being at a much greater Distance one from the other in their Aphelia, and a little nearer in their Perihelia; the Earth's Velocity, for Instance, ought to be greater, when 'tis nearer Venus and Mars, because the Fluid that carries it along, being then more press'd, ought to have a greater Motion; and yet 'tis even then that the Earth's Motion is slower.

HE proves that there is no such Thing as a celestial Matter which goes from West to East, since the Comets traverse those Spaces, sometimes from East to West, and at other Times from North to South.

In fine, the better to refolve, if possible, every Difficulty, he proves, and even by Experiments, that 'tis impossible there should be a Plenum; and brings back the Vacuum, which Aristotle and Des Cartes had banish'd from the World.

HAVING by these and several other Arguments destroy'd the Cartefian Vortices, he despair'd of ever being able to discover, whether there is a secret Principle in Nature which, at the fame Time, is the Cause of the Motion of all celestial Bodies, and that of Gravity on the Earth. But being retir'd in 1666, upon Account of the Plague, to a Solitude near Cambridge; as he was walking one Day in his Garden, and faw fome Fruits fall from a Tree, he fell into a profound Meditation on that Gravity, the Cause of which had fo long been fought, but in vain, by all the Philosophers, whilst the Vulgar think there is nothing mysterious in it. He faid to himself, that from what height foever, in our Hemisphere, those Bodies might descend, their Fall wou'd certainly be in the Progression discover'd by Galileo; and the Spaces they run thro' would be as the Square of the Times. Why may not this Power which causes heavy Bodies to descend, and is the fame without any fenfible Dimi-

Diminution at the remotest Distance from the Center of the Earth, or on the Summits of the highest Mountains; Why, faid Sir Isaac, may not this Power extend as high as the Moon? And in Case, its Influence reaches so far, is it not very probable that this Power retains it in its Orbit, and determines its Motion? But in case the Moon obeys this Principle (whatever it be) may we not conclude very naturally, that the rest of the Planets are equally subject to it? In case this Power exists (which besides is prov'd) it must increase in an inverse Ratio of the Squares of the Distances. All therefore that remains is, to examine how far a heavy Body, which should fall upon the Earth from a moderate height, would go; and how far in the same Time, a Body which should fall from the Orbit of the Moon, would descend. To find this, nothing is wanted but the Measure of the Earth, and the Distance of the Moon from it.

THUS Sir Isaac Newton reason'd. But at that Time the English had but

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a very imperfect Measure of our Globe, and depended on the uncertain Supposition of Mariners, who computed a Degree to contain but fixty English Miles, whereas it confifts in reality of near feventy. As this false Computation did not agree with the Conclusions which Sir Isaac intended to draw from them, he laid afide this Pursuir. A half-learn'd Philosopher, remarkable only for his Vanity, would have made the Measure of the Earth agree, any how, with his System: Sir Isaac, however, chose rather to quit the Refearches he was then engag'd in. But after Mr. Picart had measur'd the Earth exactly, by tracing that Meridian, which redounds fo much to the Honour of the French, Sir Isaac Newton refum'd his former Reflexions, and found his Account in Mr. Picart's Calculation.

A Circumstance which has always appear'd wonderful to me, is, that such sublime Discoveries should have been made by the sole Assistance of a Quadrant and a little Arithmetic,

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THE Circumference of the Earth is one hundred twenty three Millions, two hundred forty nine thousand fix hundred Feet. This, among other Things, is necessary to prove the System of Attraction.

THE instant we know the Earth's Circumference, and the Distance of the Moon, we know that of the Moon's Orbit, and the Diameter of this Orbit. The Moon performs its Revolution in that Orbit in twenty feven Days, feven Hours, forty three Minutes. 'Tis demonstrated, that the Moon in its mean Motion makes an hundred and fourfcore and feven thousand, nine hundred and fixty Feet (of Paris) in a Minute. 'Tis likewife demonstrated. by a known Theorem, that the central Force which should make a Body fall from the height of the Moon, would make its Velocity no more than fifteen Paris Feet in a Minute of Time. Now, if the Law by which Bodies gravitate, and attract one another in an inverse Ratio of the Squares of the Distances be true; if the same Power

Power acts, according to that Law, throughout all Nature; 'tis evident that as the Earth is fixty Semi-diameters diffant from the Moon, a heavy Body must necessarily fall (on the Earth) fifteen Feet in the first Second, and fifty four thousand Feet in the first Minute.

Now a heavy Body falls, in reality, fifteen Feet in the first Second, and goes in the first Minute fifty four thousand Foot, which Number is the Square of fixty multiplied by fifteen. Bodies therefore gravitate in an inverse Ratio of the Squares of the Distances; consequently, what causes Gravity on Earth, and keeps the Moon in its Orbit, is one and the same Power; it being demonstrated that the Moon gravitates on the Earth, which is the Center of its particular Motion, 'tis demonstrated that the Earth and the Moon gravitate on the Sun which is the Center of their annual Motion.

THE rest of the Planets must be subject to this general Law; and if this Law exists, these Planets must follow the Laws which Kepler discover'd. All

K 2 these

these Laws, all these Relations are indeed observed by the Planets with the utmost Exactness; therefore the Power of Attraction causes all the Planets to gravitate towards the Sun, in like Manner as the Moon gravitates towards our Globe.

Finally, as in all Bodies, Re-action is equal to Action, 'tis certain that the Earth gravitates also towards the Moon; and that the Sun gravitates towards both: That every one of the Satellites of Saturn gravitates towards the other four, and the other four towards it: All five towards Saturn, and Saturn towards all. That 'tis the same with regard to Jupiter; and that all these Globes are attracted by the Sun, which is reciprocally attracted by them.

This Power of Gravitation acts proportionably to the Quantity of Matter in Bodies, a Truth which Sir Ifaac has demonstrated by Experiments. This new Discovery has been of use to show, that the Sun (the Center of the planetary System) attracts them all in a direct Ratio of their Quantity of Matter combin'd with their Nearness. From hence

Sir

Sir Isaac, rising by Degrees to Discoveries which seem'd not to be form'd for the human Mind, is bold enough to compute the Quantity of Matter contain'd in the Sun and in every Planet; and in this Manner shows, from the simple Laws of Mechanicks, that every celestial Globe ought necessarily to be where it is plac'd.

His bare Principle of the Laws of Gravitation, accounts for all the apparent Inequalities in the Course of the celeftial Globes. The Variations of the Moon are a necessary Consequence of those Laws. Moreover, the Reason is evidently feen why the Nodes of the Moon perform their Revolutions in nineteen Years, and those of the Earth in about twenty fix Thousand. The several Appearances observ'd in the Tides, are also a very simple Effect of this Attraction. The Proximity of the Moon when at the full, and when it is new, and its Diftance in the Quadratures or Quarters combin'd with the Action of the Sun, exhibit a fenfible Reafon why the Ocean swells and finks.

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AFTER

AFTER having shown, by his sublime Theory, the Course and Inequalities of the Planets, he subjects Comets to the same Law. The Orbit of these Fires (unknown for so great a Series of Years,) which was the Terror of Mankind, and the Rock against which Philosophy split; plac'd by Aristotle below the Moon, and sent back by Des Cartes above the Sphere of Saturn, is at last plac'd in its proper Seat by Sir Isaac Newton.

HE proves that Comets are folid Bodies which move in the Sphere of the Sun's Activity; and that they describe an Ellipsis so very eccentric, and so near to Parabola's, that certain Comets must take up above sive hundred Years in

their Revolution.

THE learned Dr. Halley is of opinion, that the Comet seen in 1680, is the same which appear'd in Julius Cæsar's Time. This shows more than any other, that Comets are hard, opake Bodies; for it descended so near to the Sun, as to come within a fixth Part of the Diameter of this Planet from it; and conse-

confequently might have contracted a Degree of Heat two thousand Times stronger than that of red hot Iron; and would have been foon difpers'd in Vapour, had it not been a firm, dense Body. The gueffing the Course of Comets began then to be very much in vogue: The celebrated Bernoulli concluded by his System, that the famous Comet of 1680, would appear again the 17th of May 1719. Not a fingle Astronomer in Europe went to Bed that Night; however they needed not to have broke their Rest, for the famous Comet never appear'd. There is at least more Cunning, if not more Certainty, in fixing its Return to fo remote a Distance as five hundred and feventy five Years. As to Mr. Whiston, he affirm'd very seriously, that in the Time of the Deluge a Compt overflow'd the terrestrial Globe; and he was fo unreasonable as to wonder that People laugh'd at him for making fuch an Affertion. The Ancients were almost in the same way of Thinking with Mr. Whiston, and fancied that Comets were always K 4

always the Fore-runners of some great Calamity which was to befall Mankind. Sir Isaac Newton, on the contrary, fufpected that they are very beneficent; and that Vapours exhale from them merely to nourish and vivify the Planets, which imbibe in their Course the feveral Particles the Sun has detach'd from the Comets; an Opinion which at least is more probable than the former. But this is not all. If this Power of Gravitation or Attraction acts on all the celestial Globes, it acts undoubtedly on the feveral Parts of these Globes. For in case Bodies attract one another in Proportion to the Quantity of Matter contain'd in them, it can only be in Proportion to the Quantity of their Parts; and if this Power is found in the whole, 'tis undoubtedly in the half, in the quarter, in the eighth Part, and fo on in infinitum.

This is Attraction, the great Spring by which all Nature is mov'd. Sir I
Jaac Newton after having demonstrated the Existence of this Principle, plainly foresaw

forefaw that its very Name wou'd offend; and therefore this Philosopher in more Places than one of his Books, gives the Reader some Caution about it. He bids him beware of confounding this Name with what the Ancients call'd occult Qualities; but to be satisfied with knowing that there is in all Bodies a central Force which acts to the utmost Limits of the Universe, according to the invariable Laws of Mechanicks.

"Tis furprising, after the solemn Protestations Sir Isaac made, that such eminent Men as Mr. Sorin and Mr. de Fontenelle, should have imputed to this great Philosopher the verbal and chimerical Way of Reasoning of the Aristoteleans; Mr. Sorin in the Memoirs of the Academy of 1709, and Mr. de Fontenelle in the very Elogium of Sir Isaac Newton.

Most of the French, the Learned and others, have repeated this Reproach. These are for ever crying out, why did he not imploy the Word Impulsion, which is so well understood, rather than

than that of Attraction, which is unintelligible.

SIR Isaac might have answer'd these Criticks thus: First, you have as imperfect an Idea of the Word Impulsion, as of that of Attraction; and in case you cannot conceive how one Body tends towards the Center of another Body, neither can you conceive by what Power one Body can impell another.

SECONDLY, I cou'd not admit of Impulsion, for to do this, I must have known that a celestial Matter was the Agent; but so far from knowing that there is any such Matter, I have prov'd

it to be merely imaginary.

THIRDLY, I use the Word Attraction for no other Reason, but to express an Effect which I discover'd in Nature; a certain and indisputable Effect of an unknown Principle; a Quality inherent in Matter, the Cause of which Persons of greater Abilities than I can pretend to, may, if they can, find out.

WHAT have you then taught us? Will these People say further: And to

what

what Purpose are so many Calculations to tell us what you yourself don't com-

prehend?

I HAVE taught you, may Sir Isaac rejoin, that all Bodies gravitate towards one another in proportion to their Quantity of Matter; that these central Forces alone, keep the Planets and Comets in their Orbits, and cause them to move in the Proportion before set down. I demonstrate to you, that 'tis impossible there should be any other Cause which keeps the Planets in their Orbits, than that general Phenomenon of Gravity. For heavy Bodies fall on the Earth according to the Proportion demonstrated of central Forces; and the Planets finishing their Course according to these fame Proportions, in case there were another Power that acted upon all those Bodies, it would either increase their Velocity, or change their Direction. Now not one of those Bodies ever has a fingle Degree of Motion or Velocity, or has any Direction but what is demonstrated to be the Effect of the central

tral Forces; consequently 'tis impossible there should be any other Principle.

GIVE me Leave once more to introduce Sir Isaac speaking: Shall he not be allow'd to fay, My Case and that of the Ancients is very different. These faw, for Instance, Water ascend in Pumps, and faid, the Water rifes because it abhors a Vacuum. But with regard to my felf, I am in the Case of a Man who should have first observ'd that Water ascends in Pumps, but should leave others to explain the Cause of this Effect. The Anatomist who first declar'd. that the Motion of the Arm is owing to the Contraction of the Muscles, taught Mankind an indisputable Truth; but are they less oblig'd to him because he did not know the Reason why the Muscles contract? The Cause of the Elasticity of the Air is unknown, but he who first discover'd this Spring perform'd a very fignal Service to natural Philosophy. The Spring that I discover'd was more hidden and more universal, and for that very Reason Mankind ought to thank

me the more. I have discover'd a new Property of Matter, one of the Secrets of the Creator; and have calculated and discover'd the Effects of it. After this shall People quarrel with me about the Name I give it.

Vortices may be call'd an occult Quality because their Existence was never prov'd: Attraction on the contrary is a real Thing, because its Effects are demonstrated, and the Proportions of it are calculated. The Cause of this Cause is among the Arcana of the Almighty.

Procedes buc, & non amplius.
Hither thou shalt go, and no farther.



LETTER

LETTER XVI.

ON

Sir Isaac Newton's OPTICKS.

Age found out a new Universe; and a Circumstance which made its Discovery more difficult, was, that no one had so much as suspected its Existence. The most Sage and Judicious were of Opinion, that 'twas a frantic Rashness to dare so much as to imagine that it was possible to guess the Laws by which the celestial Bodies move, and the manner how Light acts. Gali-

leo by his aftronomical Discoveries, Kepler by his Calculation, Des Cartes (at least in his Dioptricks) and Sir Isaac Newton in all his Works, feverally faw the Mechanism of the Springs of the World. The Geometricians have fubjected Infinity to the Laws of Calculation. The Circulation of the Blood in Animals, and of the Sap in Vegetables, have chang'd the Face of Nature with regard to us. A new kind of Existence has been given to Bodies in the Air-Pump. By the Affistance of Telescopes Bodies have been brought nearer to one another. Finally, the feveral Discoveries which Sir Isaac Newton has made on Light, are equal to the boldest Things which the Curiofity of Man could expect, after fo many philosophical Novelties.

TILL Antonio de Dominis, the Rainbow was confider'd as an inexplicable Miracle. This Philosopher guess'd that it was a necessary Effect of the Sun and Rain. Des Cartes gain'd immortal Fame, by his mathematical Explication of this

fo natural a Phænomenon. He calculated the Reflexions and Refractions of Light in Drops of Rain; and his Sagacity on this Occasion was at that Time look'd upon as next to divine.

Bur what would he have faid had it been prov'd to him that he was mistaken in the Nature of Light; that he had not the least Reason to maintain that 'tis a globular Body: That 'tis false to affert, that this Matter spreading it felf through the whole, waits only to be projected forward by the Sun, in order to be put in Action, in like Manner as a long Staff acts at one end when push'd forward by the other. That Light is certainly darted by the Sun; in fine, that Light is transmitted from the Sun to the Earth in about feven Minutes, tho' a Cannon Ball, which were not to lofe any of its Velocity, cou'd not go that Distance in less than twenty five Years. How great wou'd have been his Astonishment, had he been told, that Light does not reflect directly by impinging against the solid Parts of Bodies :

dies; that Bodies are not transparent when they have large Pores; and that a Man should arise, who would demonstrate all these Paradoxes, and anatomize a fingle Ray of Light with more Dexterity than the ablest Artist diffects a human Body. This Man is come. Sir Isaac Newton has demonstrated to the Eye, by the bare Affistance of the Prism, that Light is a Composition of colour'd Rays, which, being united, form white Colour. A fingle Ray is by him divided into feven, which all fall upon a Piece of Linen, or a Sheet of white Paper, in their Order one above the other, and at unequal Distances. The first is Red, the second Orange, the third Yellow, the fourth Green, the fifth Blue, the fixth Indigo, the feventh a Violet Purple. Each of these Rays transmitted afterwards by an hundred other Prisms, will never change the Colour it bears; in like Manner as Gold, when completely purg'd from its Drofs, will never change afterwards in the Crucible. As a superabundant Proof that each L

each of these elementary Rays has inherently in it self that which forms its Colour to the Eye, take a small Piece of yellow Wood for Instance, and set it in the Ray of a red Colour, this Wood will instantly be ting'd red; but set it in the Ray of a green Colour, it assumes a green Colour, and so of all the rest.

FROM what Cause therefore do Colours arise in Nature? 'Tis nothing but the Disposition of Bodies to reslect the Rays of a certain Order, and to absorb

all the reft.

What then is this fecret Disposition? Sir Isaac Newton demonstrates, that 'tis nothing more than the Density of the small constituent Particles of which a Body is compos'd. And how is this Reslexion perform'd? 'Twas suppos'd to arise from the Rebounding of the Rays, in the same Manner as a Ball on the Surface of a folid Body; but this is a Mistake, for Sir Isaac taught the astonish'd Philosophers, that Bodies are opake for no other Reason, but because their Pores are large; that Light reslects

on our Eyes from the very Bosom of those Pores; that the smaller the Pores of a Body are, the more such a Body is transparent. Thus Paper which reslects the Light when dry, transmits it when oil'd, because the Oil, by filling its Pores, makes them much smaller.

'Tis there that examining the vast Porofity of Bodies, every Particle having its Pores, and every Particle of those Particles having its own; he shows we are not certain that there is a cubic Inch of folid Matter in the Universe, so far are we from conceiving what Matter is. Having thus divided, as it were, Light into its Elements, and carried the Sagacity of his Difcoveries fo far, as to prove the Method of diftinguishing compound Colours from fuch as are primitive; he shews, that these elementary Rays separated by the Prism, are rang'd in their Order for no other Reason but because they are refracted in that very Order; and 'tis this Property (unknown till he discover'd it) of breaking or splitting in this Proportion; 'tis this unequal Refraction of L 2

Rays, this Power of refracting the red less than the orange Colour, &c. which he calls the different Refrangibility. The most reflexible Rays are the most refrangible, and from hence he evinces that the fame Power is the Cause both of the Reflection and Refraction of Light.

But all these Wonders are merely but the Opening of his Discoveries. He found out the Secret to see the Vibrations or Fits of Light, which come and go inceffantly, and which either transmit Light or reflect it according to the Denfity of the Parts they meet with. He has prefum'd to calculate the Denfity of the Particles of Air necessary between two Glasses, the one flat, the other convex on one fide, fet one upon the other: in order to operate fuch a Transmission or Reflexion, or to form fuch and fuch a Colour.

From all these Combinations he discovers the Proportion in which Light acts on Bodies, and Bodies act on Light.

HE faw Light fo perfectly, that he has determin'd to what Degree of Perfection

Ction the Art of increasing it, and of affisting our Eyes by Telescopes can be carried.

Des Cartes, from a noble Confidence, that was very excusable considering how strongly he was fir'd at the first Discoveries he made in an Art which he almost first found out; Des Cartes, I say, hop'd to discover in the Stars, by the Assistance of Telescopes, Objects as small as those we discern upon the Earth.

But Sir Isaac has shown, that Dioptric Telescopes cannot be brought to a greater Perfection; because of that Refraction, and of that very Refrangibilty, which at the fame Time that they bring Objects nearer to us, scatter too much the elementary Rays; he has calculated in these Glasses the Proportion of the scattering of the red and of the blue Rays; and proceeding fo far as to demonstrate Things which were not suppos'd even to exist, he examines the Inequalities which arise from the Shape or Figure of the Glass, and that which arises from the Refrangibility. He finds, that the object Glass of the Telescope being con-

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vex on one fide and flat on the other, in case the flat Side be turn'd towards the Object, the Error which arises from the Construction and Position of the Glass, is above five thousand Times less than the Error which arises from the Refrangibility: And therefore, that the Shape or Figure of the Glasses is not the Cause why Telescopes cannot be carried to a greater Persection, but arises wholly from the Nature of Light.

For this Reason he invented a Telescope, which discovers Objects by Reflection and not by Refraction. Telescopes of this new kind are very hard to make, and their Use is not easy. But according to the English, a reflective Telescope of but five Feet, has the same Effect as another of an hundred Feet in Length.



LETTER

LETTER XVII.

ON

Infinites in Geometry,

AND

Sir Isaac Newton's

CHRONOLOGY.

HE Labyrinth and Abyss of Infinity, is also a new Course Sir Isaac Newton has gone through, and we are oblig'd to him for the Clue by whose Assistance we are enabled to trace its various Windings.

Des Cartes got the Start of him also in this astonishing Invention. He L 4 advanc'd

advanc'd with mighty Steps in his Geometry, and was arriv'd at the very Borders of Infinity, but went no farther. Dr. Wallis about the Middle of the last Century, was the first who reduc'd a Fraction by a perpetual Division to an infinite Series.

THE Lord Brounker employ'd this Series to fquare the Hyperbola.

MERCATOR publish'd a Demonstration of this Quadrature, much about which Time, Sir Isaac Newton being then twenty three Years of Age, had invented a general Method to perform, on all geometrical Curves, what had just before been try'd on the Hyperbola.

'Tis to this Method of subjecting every where Infinity to algebraical Calculations, that the Name is given of differential Calculations or of Fluxions, and integral Calculation. 'Tis the Art of numbring and measuring exactly a Thing whose Existence cannot be conceiv'd.

And, indeed, would you not imagine that a Man laugh'd at you, who should declare that there are Lines infinitely

great

great which form an Angle infinitely little?

THAT a right Line, which is a right Line fo long as it is finite, by changing infinitely little its Direction, becomes an infinite Curve; and that a Curve may become infinitely less than another Curve?

THAT there are infinite Squares, infinite Cubes; and Infinites of Infinites all greater than one another, and the last but one of which, is nothing in Comparison of the last?

ALL these Things which at first appear to be the utmost Excess of Frenzy, are in reality an Effort of the Subtilty and Extent of the human Mind, and the Art of finding Truths which till then had been unknown.

This fo bold Edifice is even founded on fimple Ideas. The Bufiness is to measure the Diagonal of a Square, to give the Area of a Curve, to find the square Root of a Number, which has none in common Arithmetic. After all, the Imagination ought not to be startled any more at so many Orders of Infinites,

Infinites, than at the fo well known Proposition, viz. that Curve Lines may always be made to pass between a Circle and a Tangent; or at that other, namely that Matter is divisible in infinitum. These two Truths have been demonstrated many Years, and are no less incomprehensible than the Things we

have been speaking of.

For many Years the Invention of this famous Calculation was denied Sir Isaac Newton. In Germany Mr. Leibnitz was confider'd as the Inventor of the Differences or Moments, call'd * Fluxions, and Mr. Bernouilli claim'd the integral Calculation. However, Sir Isaac is now thought to have first made the Discovery, and the other two have the Glory of having once made the World doubt whether 'twas to be afcrib'd to him or them. Thus fome contested with Dr. Harvey the Invention of the Circulation of the Blood, as others disputed with Mr. Perrault that of the Circulation of the Sap.

^{*} By Sir Isaac Newton.

HARTSOCHER and Lewenboeck difputed with each other the Honour of having first seen the Vermiculi of which Mankind are form'd. This Hartfocher also contested with Huygens the Invention of a new Method of calculating the Distance of a fix'd Star. 'Tis not yet known to what Philosopher we owe the Invention of the Cycloid.

BE this as it will, 'tis by the Help of this Geometry of Infinites that Sir Isaac Newton attain'd to the most sublime Discoveries. I am now to speak of another Work, which tho' more adapted to the Capacity of the human Mind, does nevertheless display some Marks of that creative Genius with which Sir Isaac Newton was inform'd in all his Refearches. The Work I mean is a Chronology of a new kind, for what Province foever he undertook, he was fure to change the Ideas and Opinions receiv'd by the rest of Men.

Accustom'd to unravel and difintangle Chaos's, he was refolv'd to convey at least some Light into that of the Fa-

bles

bles of Antiquity which are blended and confounded with History, and fix an uncertain Chronology. 'Tis true, that there is no Family, City or Nation, but endeavours to remove its Original as far backward as possible. Besides, the first Historians were the most negligent in fetting down the Æra's; Books were infinitely less common than they are at this Time, and confequently Authors being not fo obnoxious to Cenfure, they therefore impos'd upon the World with greater Impunity; and as 'tis evident that these have related a great Number of fictitious Particulars, 'tis probable enough that they also gave us several false Æra's.

It appear'd in general to Sir Isaac, that the World was five hundred Years younger than Chronologers declare it to be. He grounds his Opinion on the ordinary Course of Nature, and on the Observations which Astronomers have made,

By the Course of Nature we here understand the Time that every Generation

ration of Men lives upon the Earth. The Egyptians first employ'd this vague and uncertain Method of calculating, when they began to write the Beginning of their History. These computed three hundred and forty one Generations from Menes to Sethon; and having no fix'd Æra, they suppos'd three Generations to consist of an hundred Years. In this Manner they computed eleven thousand three hundred and forty Years from Menes's Reign to that of Sethon.

THE Greeks before they counted by Olympiads, follow'd the Method of the Egyptians, and even gave a little more Extent to Generations, making each to

confist of forty Years.

Now here both the Egyptians and the Greeks made an erroneous Computation. 'Tis true indeed, that according to the usual Course of Nature three Generations last about an hundred and twenty Years: But three Reigns are far from taking up so many. 'Tis very evident, that Mankind in general live longer than Kings are found to reign: So that

that an Author who should write a History, in which there were no Dates fix'd, and should know that nine Kings had reign'd over a Nation; fuch an Historian, would commit a great Error should he allow three hundred Years to these nine Monarchs. Every Generation takes about thirty fix Years; every Reign is, one with the other, about twenty. Thirty Kings of England have fway'd the Scepter from William the Conqueror to George the First, the Years of whose Reigns added together, amount to fix hundred and forty eight Years; which being divided equally among the thirty Kings, give to every one a Reign of twenty one Years and a half very near. Sixty three Kings of France have fet upon the Throne; thefe have, one with another, reign'd about twenty Years each. This is the usual Course of Nature: The Ancients therefore were mistaken, when they suppos'd the Durations in general, of Reigns, to equal that of Generations. They therefore allow'd too great a Number of Years,

and

and confequently fome Years must be substracted from their Computation.

ASTRONOMICAL Observations seem to have lent a still greater Assistance to our Philosopher. He appears to us stronger when he sights upon his own Ground.

You know that the Earth, besides its annual Motion which carries it round the Sun from West to East in the Space of a Year, has also a fingular Revolution which was quite unknown till within these late Years. Its Poles have a very flow retrograde Motion from East to West, whence it happens that their Position every Day does not correspond exactly with the same Point of the Heavens. This Difference which is so insensible in a Year, becomes pretty confiderable in Time; and in threescore and twelve Years the Difference is found to be of one Degree, that is to fay, the three hundred and fixtieth Part of the Circumference of the whole Heaven. Thus after feventy two Years the Colure of the vernal Equinox which pass'd thro' a fix'd Star, corresponds with another fix'd Star. Hence it is, that the Sun, instead

instead of being in that Part of the Heavens in which the Ram was situated in the Time of Hipparchus, is found to correspond with that Part of the Heavens in which the Bull was situated; and the Twins are plac'd where the Bull then stood. All the Signs have chang'd their Situation, and yet we still retain the same Manner of speaking as the Ancients did. In this Age we say that the Sun is in the Ram in the Spring, from the same Principle of Condescension that we say that the Sun turns round.

HIPPARCHUS was the first among the Greeks who observed some Change in the Constellations with regard to the Equinoxes, or rather who learnt it from the Egyptians. Philosophers ascribed this Motion to the Stars; for in those Ages People were far from imagining such a Revolution in the Earth, which was supposed to be immoveable in every respect. They therefore created a Heaven in which they fixed the several Stars, and gave this Heaven a particular Motion by which it was carried towards

towards the East, whilst that all the Stars feem'd to perform their diurnal Revolution from East to West. To this Error they added a fecond of much greater Consequence, by imagining that the pretended Heaven of the fix'd Stars advanc'd one Degree eastward every hundred Years. In this Manner they were no less mistaken in their astronomical Calculation than in their System of Natural Philosophy. As for Instance, an Astronomer in that Age would have faid, that the Vernal Equinox was in the Time of fuch and fuch an Observation, in such a Sign, and in fuch a Star. It has advanc'd two Degrees of each fince the Time that Obfervation was made to the present. Now two Degrees are equivalent to two hundred Years; confequently the Astronomer who made that Observation liv'd just so many Years before me. 'Tis certain that an Astronomer who had argued in this Manner would have mistook just fifty four Years; hence it is that the Ancients, who were doubly deceiv'd, made their M

their great Year of the World, that is, the Revolution of the whole Heavens, to confift of thirty fix thousand Years. But the Moderns are sensible that this imaginary Revolution of the Heaven of the Stars, is nothing else than the Revolution of the Poles of the Earth, which is perform'd in twenty five thousand nine hundred Years. It may be proper to observe transiently in this Place, that Sir Isaac, by determining the Figure of the Earth, has very happily explain'd the Cause of this Revolution.

Thing remaining to fettle Chronology, is, to fee thro' what Star, the Colure of the Equinoxes passes, and where it interfects at this Time the Ecliptick in the Spring; and to discover whether some ancient Writer does not tell us in what Point the Ecliptic was intersected in his Time, by the same Colure of the Equinoxes.

that Chiron, who went with the Argonauts, observed the Constellations at the Time of that famous Expedition, and

the ENGLISH NATION. 163 fix'd the vernal Equinox to the Middle of the Ram; the autumnal Equinox to the Middle of Libra; our Summer Solflice to the Middle of Cancer, and our

pricorn.

A LONG Time after the Expedition of the Argonauts, and a Year before the Peloponnesian War, Methon observ'd that the Point of the Summer Solftice pass'd thro'

Winter Solftice to the Middle of Ca-

the eighth Degree of Cancer.

Now every Sign of the Zodiack contains thirty Degrees. In Chiron's Time, the Solftice was arriv'd at the Middle of the Sign, that is to fay to the fifteenth Degree. A Year before the Peloponnesian War it was at the eighth, and therefore it had retarded seven Degrees. A Degree is equivalent to seventy two Years; consequently, from the Beginning of the Peloponnesian War to the Expedition of the Argonauts, there is no more than an Interval of seven times seventy two Years, which make five hundred and four Years, and not seven hundred Years, as the Greeks computed. Thus in com-

M 2 paring

paring the Position of the Heavens at this Time, with their Position in that Age, we find that the Expedition of the Argonauts ought to be plac'd about nine hundred Years before Christ, and not about fourteen hundred; and confequently that the World is not fo old by five hundred Years as it was generally suppos'd to be. By this Calculation all the Æra's are drawn nearer, and the feveral Events are found to have happen'd later than is computed. I don't know whether this ingenious System will be favourably receiv'd; and whether these Notions will prevail fo far with the Learned, as to prompt them to reform the Chronology of the World. Perhaps these Gentlemen would think it too great a Condescension, to allow one and the fame Man the Glory of having improv'd natural Philosophy, Geometry and History. This would be a kind of universal Monarchy, which the Principle of Self-Love that is in Man, will fcarce fuffer him to indulge his Fellow-Creature; and, indeed, at the same Time that fome

fome very great Philosophers attack'd Sir Isaac Newton's attractive Principle, others fell upon his chronological System. Time that shou'd discover to which of these the Victory is due, may perhaps only leave the Dispute still more undetermin'd.



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LET-

LETTER XVIII.

ON

TRAGEDY.

HE English as well as the Spaniards were posses'd of Theatres, at a Time when the French had no more than moving, itinerant Stages. Shakespear, who was consider'd as the Corneille of the first mention'd Nation, was pretty near Cotemporary with Lopez de Vega, and he created, as it were, the English Theatre. Shakespear boasted a strong, fruitful Genius: He was natural and sublime, but had not so much as a single Spark of good Taste, or knew one Rule of the Drama. I

will now hazard a random, but, at the same Time, true Reflection, which is, that the great Merit of this Dramatic Poet has been the Ruin of the English Stage. There are fuch beautiful, fuch noble, fuch dreadful Scenes in this Writer's monstrous Farces, to which the Name of Tragedy is given, that they have always been exhibited with great Success. Time, which only gives Reputation to Writers, at last makes their very Faults venerable. Most of the whimfical, gigantic Images of this Poet, have, thro' Length of Time (it being an hundred and fifty Years fince they were first drawn) acquir'd a Right of paffing for fublime. Most of the modern dramatic Writers have copied him; but the Touches and Descriptions which are applauded in Shakespear, are hiss'd at in these Writers; and you'll eafily believe that the Veneration in which this Author is held, increases in Proportion to the Contempt which is shown to the Moderns. Dramatic Writers don't confider that they should not M 4 imitate

imitate him; and the ill Success of Shakespear's Imitators, produces no other Effect, than to make him be confider'd as inimitable. You remember that in the Tragedy of OTHELLO Moor of Venice, (a most tender Piece) a Man strangles his Wife on the Stage; and that the poor Woman, whilst she is strangling, cries aloud, that she dies very unjustly. You know that in HAMLET Prince of Denmark, two Grave-Diggers make a Grave, and are all the Time drinking, finging Ballads, and making humourous Reflexions, (natural indeed enough to Persons of their Profession) on the several Skulls they throw up with their Spades; but a Circumstance which will furprize you is, that this ridiculous Incident has been imitated. In the Reign of King Charles the Second, which was that of Politeness, and the Golden Age of the Liberal Arts; Otway, in his VENICE PRESERV'D, introduces Antonio the Senator, and Naki his Curtezan, in the Midst of the Horrors of the Marquis of Bedemar's Conspiracy. Antonia

nio, the fuperannuated Senator plays, in his Mistress's Presence, all the apish Tricks of a lewd, impotent Debauchee who is quite frantic and out of his Senses. He mimicks a Bull and a Dog; and bites his Mistress's Legs, who kicks and whips him. However, the Players have struck these Buffoones ries (which indeed were calculated merely for the Dregs of the People) out of Otway's Tragedy; but they have still left in Shakespear's Julius CÆ-SAR, the Jokes of the Roman Shoemakers and Coblers, who are introduc'd in the same Scene with Brutus and Cashus. You will undoubtedly complain, that those who have hitherto discours'd with you on the English Stage, and especially on the celebrated Shakespear, have taken Notice only of his Errors; and that no one has translated any of those strong, those forcible Passages which atone for all his Faults. But to this I will answer, that nothing is easier than to exhibit in Profe all the filly Impertinencies which a Poet may have thrown out; but that 'tis a very difficult Task

to translate his fine Verses. All your junior academical Sophs, who set up for Censors of the eminent Writers, compile whole Volumes; but methinks two Pages which display some of the Beauties of great Genius's, are of infinitely more Value than all the idle Rhapsodies of those Commentators; and I will join in Opinion with all Persons of good Taste in declaring, that greater Advantage may be reap'd from a Dozen Verses of Homer or Virgil, than from all the Critiques put together which have been made on those two great Poets.

I HAVE ventur'd to translate some Passages of the most celebrated English Poets, and shall now give you one from Shakespear. Pardon the Blemishes of the Translation for the Sake of the Original; and remember always that when you see a Version, you see merely a faint Print of a beautiful Picture. I have made Choice of Part of the celebrated Soliloquy in Hamlet, which you may remember is as follows.

Tobe, or not to be! that is the Question!
Whether 'tis nobler in the Mind to suffer

The Stings and Arrows of outrageous Fortune,

Or to take Arms against a Sea of Troubles,

And by opposing, end them? To dye! to sleep!

No more! and by a Sleep to fay we end The Heart-ach, and the thousand natural Shocks

That Flesh is Heir to! 'Tis a Consummation

Devoutly to be wish'd. To die! to sleep!
To sleep, perchance to dream! Oy,
there's the Rub;

For in that Sleep of Death, what Dreams may come

When we have shuffled off this mortal Coyle,

Must give us Pause. There's the respect That makes Calamity of so long Life: For who wou'd bear the Whips and Scorns of Time,

Th'

Th' Oppressor's Wrong, the poor Man's contumely,

The Pangs of despis'd Love, the Laws Delay,

The Insolence of Office, and the Spurns That patient Merit of th' unworthy takes,

When he himself might his Quietus make With a bare Bodkin? Who would these Fardles bear

To groan and sweat under a weary Life, But that the Dread of something after Death,

Th' undiscover'd Country, from whose Bourn

No Traveller returns, puzzles the Will, And makes us rather bear those Ills we have,

Than fly to others that we know not of? Thus Conscience does make Cowards of us all;

And thus the native Hue of Resolution Is sickled o'er with the pale Cast of Thought:

And Enterprizes of great Weight and Moment

With

the ENGLISH NATION. 173
With this Regard their Currents turn
away,
And lose the Name of Action—

My Version of it runs thus:

Demeure, il faut choisir & passer à l'instant

De la vie, à la mort, ou de l'Etre au neant.

Dieux cruels, s'il en est, éclairez mon courage.

Faut-il vieillir courbé sous la main qui m'outrage,

Supporter, ou finir mon malbeur & mon fort?

Qui suis je? Qui m'arrete! & qu'estce que la Mort?

C'est la fin de nos maux, c'est mon unique Azile

Après de long transports, c'est un sommeil tranquile.

On s'endort, & tout meurt, mais un affreux reveil

Doit succeder peut etre aux douceurs du sommeil!

On.

On nous menace, on dit que cette courte Vie,

De tourmens éternels est aussi-tôt suivie.

O Mort! moment fatal! affreuse Eternité!

Tout cœur à ton seul nom se glace épouvanté.

Eh! qui pourroit sans Toi supporter cette vie,

De nos Prêtres menteurs benir l'hypocrisie;

D'une indigne Maitresse encenser les erreurs,

Ramper sous un Ministre, adorer ses bauteurs;

Et montrer les langueurs de son amé abattue,

A des Amis ingrats qui detournent la vüe? La Mort seroit trep douce en ces extré-

mitez,

Mais le scrupule parle, & nous crie, Arrêtez;

Il defend à nos mains cet heureux bomicide

Et d'un Heros guerrier, fait un Chrétien timide, &c.

DON'T

Don't imagine that I have translated Shakespear in a servile Manner. Woe to the Writer who gives a literal Version; who by rendring every Word of his Original, by that very means enervates the Sense, and extinguishes all the Fire of it. 'Tis on such an Occasion one may justly affirm, that the Letter kills, but the Spirit quickens.

HERE follows another Passage copied from a celebrated Tragic Writer among the English. 'Tis Dryden, a Poet in the Reign of Charles the Second; a Writer whose Genius was too exuberant, and not accompanied with Judgment enough. Had he writ only a tenth Part of the Works he left behind him, his Character wou'd have been conspicuous in every Part; but his great Fault is his having endeavour'd to be universal.

THE Paffage in Question is as follows:

When I consider Life, 'tis all a Cheat,
Yet fool'd by Hope, Men favour the
Deceit;

Trust

Trust on and think, to Morrow will repay;

To Morrow's falser than the former Day;

Lies more; and whilft it says we shall be bleft

With some new Joy cuts off what we possest;

Strange Cozenage! none wou'd live past Years again,

Yet all hope Pleasure in what yet remain,

And from the Dregs of Life think to receive

What the first sprightly Running could not give.

I'm tir'd with waiting for this chymic Gold,

Which fools us young, and beggars us when old.

I shall now give you my Translation.

De desseins en regrets & d'erreurs en desirs

Les Mortels insensés promenent leur Folie, Dans

Dans des malheurs presents, dans l'espoir des plaisirs

Nous ne vivons jamais, nous attendons la vie.

Demain, demain, dit-on, va combler tous nos væux.

Demain vient, & nous laisse encore plus malheureux.

Qu'elle est l'erreur, helas! du soin qui nous dévore,

Nul de nous ne voudroit recommencer fon cours.

De nos premiers momens nous maudif-.

fons l'aurore,

Et de la nuit qui vient, nous attendons encore

Ce qu'ont en vain promis les plus beaux de nos jours, &c.

'Trs in these detach'd Passages that the English have hitherto excell'd. Their dramatic Pieces, most of which are barbarous and without Decorum, Order or Verisimilitude, dart such resplendent Flashes, thro' this Gleam, as amaze and astonish. The Style is too much inflated,

too unnatural, too closely copied from the Hebrew Writers, who abound fo much with the Afiatic Fustian. But then it must be also confess'd, that the Stilts of the figurative Style on which the English Tongue is lifted up, raises the Genius at the same Time very far aloft, tho' with an irregular Pace. The first English Writer who compos'd a regular Tragedy and infus'd a Spirit of Elegance thro' every Part of it, was the illustrious Mr. Addison. His CATO is a Master-piece both with regard to the Diction, and to the Beauty and Harmony of the Numbers. The Character of Cato is, in my Opinion, vaftly fuperiour to that of Cornelia in the Pompey of Corneille: For Cato is great without any Thing like Fustian, and Cornelia, who besides is not a necessary Character, tends fometimes to bombast. Mr. Addifon's Cato appears to me the greatest Character that was ever brought upon any Stage, but then the rest of them don't correspond to the Dignity of it: And this dramatic Piece fo excellently well

well writ, is disfigur'd by a dull Love-Plot, which spreads a certain Languor over the whole, that quite murders it.

THE Custom of introducing Love at random and at any rate in the Drama, pass'd from Paris to London about 1660. with our Ribbons and our Peruques. The Ladies who adorn the Theatrical Circle, there, in like Manner as in this City, will fuffer Love only to be the Theme of every Conversation. The judicious Mr. Addison had the effeminate Complaifance to foften the Severity of his dramatic Character so, as to adapt it to the Manners of the Age; and from an Endeavour to please, quite ruin'd a Master-Piece in its kind. Since his Time, the Drama is become more regular, the Audience more difficult to be pleas'd, and Writers more correct and less bold. I have feen fome new Pieces that were written with great Regularity, but which at the same Time were very flat and infipid. One would think that the English had been hitherto form'd to produce irregular Beauties only. The shining Mon-N 2 fters

sters of Shakespear, give infinite more Delight than the judicious Images of the Moderns. Hitherto the poetical Genius of the English resembles a tusted Tree planted by the Hand of Nature, that throws out a thousand Branches at random, and spreads unequally, but with great Vigour. It dies if you attempt to force its Nature, and to lop and dress it in the same Manner as the Trees of the Garden of Marli.



LETTER

LETTER XIX.

ON

COMEDY.

AM furpriz'd that the judicious and ingenious Mr. de Muralt, who has publish'd some Letters on the English and French Nations, should have confin'd himself, in treating of Comedy, merely to censure Shadwell the comic Writer. This Author was had in pretty great Contempt in Mr. de Muralt's Time, and was not the Poet of the polite Part of the Nation. His dramatic Pieces which pleas'd some Time in acting, were despis'd by all Persons of Taste

N₃ and

and might be compar'd to many Plays which I have feen in France, that drew Crowdsto the Play-house, at the same Time that they were intolerable to read; and of which it might be faid, that the whole City of Paris exploded them, and vet all flock'd to fee 'em represented on the Stage. Methinks Mr. de Muralt should have mention'd an excellent comic Writer (living when he was in England) I mean Mr. Wycherley, who was a long Time known publickly to be happy in the good Graces of the most celebrated Mistress of King Charles the Second. This Gentleman who pass'd his Life among Persons of the highest Distinction, was perfectly well acquainted with their Lives and their Follies, and painted them with the strongest Pencil, and in the truest Colours. He has drawn a Misantrope or Man-hater, in Imitation of that of Moliere. All Wycherley's Strokes are stronger and bolder than those of our Misantrope, but then they are less delicate, and the Rules of Decorum are not fo well

well observ'd in this Play. The English Writer has corrected the only Defect that is in Moliere's Comedy, the Thinness of the Plot, which also is so dispos'd that the Characters in it do not enough raife our Concern, The English Comedy affects us, and the Contrivance of the Plot is very ingenious, but at the same Time 'tis too bold for the French The Fable is this. -- A Captain of a Man of War, who is very brave, open-hearted, and enflam'd with a Spirit of Contempt for all Mankind, has a prudent, fincere Friend whom he yet is suspicious of, and a Mistress that loves him with the utmost Excess of Passion. The Captain so far from returning her Love, will not even condescend to look upon her; but confides intirely in a false Friend, who is the most worthless Wretch living. At the fame Time he has given his Heart to a Creature who is the greatest Coquet, and the most perfidious of her Sex, and is fo credulous as to be confident the is a Penelope, and his false Friend a Cato. N4

He embarks on board his Ship in order to go and fight the Dutch, having left all his Money, his Jewels and every Thing he had in the World to this virtuous Creature, whom at the same Time he recommends to the Care of his fuppos'd faithful Friend. Nevertheless the real Man of Honour whom he suspects fo unaccountably, goes on board the Ship with him; and the Mistress on whom he would not bestow so much as one Glance, disguises herself in the Habit of a Page, and is with him the whole Voyage, without his once knowing that she is of a Sex different from that she attempts to pass for, which, by the Way, is not over natural.

THE Captain having blown up his own Ship in an Engagement, returns to England abandon'd and undone, accompanied by his Page and his Friend, without knowing the Friendship of the one, or the tender Passion of the other. Immediately he goes to the Jewel among Women, who he expected had preserv'd her Fidelity to him, and the Treasure he had left in her Hands. He

meets

meets with her indeed, but married to the honest Knave in whom he had repos'd fo much Confidence; and finds she had acted as treacherously with regard to the Casket he had entrusted her with. The Captain can scarce think it possible, that a Woman of Virtue and Honour can act fo vile a Part; but to convince him still more of the Reality of it, this very worthy Lady falls in Love with the little Page, and will force him to her Embraces. But as it is requifite Justice should be done, and that in a dramatick Piece Virtue ought to be rewarded and Vice punish'd; 'tis at last found that the Captain takes his Page's Place, and lyes with his faithless Mistress, cuckolds his treacherous Friend, thrusts his Sword through his Body, recovers his Casket and marries his Page. You'll observe that this Play is also larded with a petulant, litigious old Woman (a Relation of the Captain) who is the most comical Character that was ever brought upon the Stage.

WYCHER-

WYCHERLEY has also copied from Moliere another Play, of as singular and bold a Cast, which is a kind of Ecole des Femmes, or, School for married Women.

THE principal Character in this Comedy is one Horner, a fly Fortune-Hunter, and the Terror of all the City Husbands. This Fellow in order to play a furer Game, causes a Report to be fpread, that in his last Illness, the Surgeons had found it necessary to have him made an Eunuch. Upon his appearing in this noble Character, all the Husbands in Town flock to him with their Wives, and now poor Horner is only puzzled about his Choice. However, he gives the Preference particularly to a little female Peafant; a very harmless, innocent Creature, who enjoys a fine Flush of Health, and cuckolds her Husband with a Simplicity that has infinitely more Merit than the witty Malice of the most experienc'd Ladies. This Play cannot indeed be call'd the School of good Morals, but 'tis certainly the School of Wit and true Humour.

SIR John Vanbrugh has writ feveral Comedies which are more humourous than those of Mr. Wycherley, but not so ingenious. Sir John was a Man of Pleasure, and likewise a Poet and an Architect. The general Opinion is, that he is as fprightly in his Writings as he is heavy in his Buildings. 'Tis he who rais'd the famous Castle of Blenheim, a ponderous and lasting Monument of our unfortunate Battle of Hockstet. Were the Apartments but as spacious as the Walls are thick, this Castle wou'd be commodious enough. Some Wag, in an Epitaph he made on Sir John Vanbrugh, has these Lines:

Earth lye light on him, for he Laid many a heavy Load on thee.

SIR John having taken a Tour into France before the glorious War that broke out in 1701, was thrown into the Bastile, and detain'd there for some Time, without being ever able to discover the Motive which had prompted

our Ministry to indulge him this Mark of their Distinction. He writ a Comedy during his Confinement; and a Circumstance which appears to me very extraordinary is, that we don't meet with so much as a single satyrical Stroke against the Country in which he had

been so injuriously treated.

THE late Mr. Congreve rais'd the Glory of Comedy to a greater Height than any English Writer before or fince his Time. He wrote only a few Plays, but they are all excellent in their kind. The Laws of the Drama are strictly observ'd in them; they abound with Characters all which are shadow'd with the utmost Delicacy, and we don't meet with fo much as one low, or coarfe Jest. The Language is every where that of Men of Honour, but their Actions are those of Knaves; a Proof that he was perfectly well acquainted with human Nature, and frequented what we call polite Company. He was infirm, and come to the Verge of Life when I knew him. Mr. Congreve had one Defect, which

which was, his entertaining too mean an Idea of his first Profession; (that of a Writer) tho' 'twas to this he ow'd his Fame and Fortune. He spoke of his Works as of Trisles that were beneath him; and hinted to me in our first Conversation, that I should visit him upon no other Foot than that of a Gentleman, who led a Life of Plainness and Simplicity. I answer'd, that had he been so unfortunate as to be a mere Gentleman I should never have come to see him; and I was very much disgusted at so unseasonable a Piece of Vanity.

MR. Congreve's Comedies are the most witty and regular, those of Sir John Vanbrugh most gay and humourous, and those of Mr. Wycherley have the greatest Force and Spirit. It may be proper to observe, that these fine Genius's never spoke disadvantageously of Moliere; and that none but the contemptible Writers among the English have endeavour'd to lessen the Character of that great comic Poet. Such Italian Musicians as despise Lully are themselves Persons of no Cha-

racter or Ability; but a Buononcini esfleems that great Artist, and does Justice to his Merit.

THE English have some other good comic Writers living, such as Sir Rischard Steele, and Mr. Cibber, who is an excellent Player, and also Poet Laureat, a Title which how ridiculous soever it may be thought, is yet worth a thousand Crowns a Year, (besides some considerable Privileges) to the Person who enjoys it. Our illustrious Corneille had not so much.

To conclude. Don't defire me to deficend to Particulars with regard to these English Comedies, which I am so fond of applauding; nor to give you a single smart Saying, or humorous Stroke from Wycherley or Congreve. We don't laugh in reading a Translation. If you have a Mind to understand the English Comedy, the only way to do this will be for you to go to England, to spend three Years in London, to make your self Master of the English Tongue, and to frequent the Play-house every Night. I receive

but little Pleasure from the Perusal of Aristophanes and Plautus, and for this Reason, because I am neither a Greek nor a Roman. The Delicacy of the Humour, the Allusion, the à propos, all these are lest to a Fersioner.

these are lost to a Foreigner.

But 'tis different with respect to Tragedy, this treating only of exalted Passions and heroical Follies, which the antiquated Errors of Fable or History have made facred. Oedipus, Electra and such like Characters, may with as much Propriety, be treated of by the Spaniards, the English, or Us, as by the Greeks. But true Comedy is the speaking Picture of the Follies and ridiculous Foibles of a Nation; so that he only is able to judge of the Painting, who is perfectly acquainted with the People it represents.



LETTER

LETTER XX.

On fuch of the

NOBILITY

As cultivate the

BELLES LETTRES.

HERE once was a Time in France when the polite Arts were cultivated by Persons of the highest Rank in the State. The Courtiers particularly, were conversant in them, altho' Indolence, a Taste for Trisles, and a Passion for Intrigue, were the Divinities of the Country. The Court

Court methinks at this Time feems to have given into a Taste quite opposite to that of polite Literature, but perhaps the Mode of Thinking may be reviv'd in a little Time. The French are of fo flexible a Disposition, may be moulded into fuch a Variety of Shapes, that the Monarch needs but command and he is immediately obey'd. The English generally think, and Learning is had in greater Honour among them than in our Country; an Advantage that refults naturally from the Form of their Government. There are about eight hundred Persons in England who have a Right to speak in publick, and to support the Interest of the Kingdom; and near five or fix Thousand may in their Turns, aspire to the same Honour. The whole Nation fet themfelves up as Judges over these, and every Man has the Liberty of publishing his Thoughts with regard to publick Affairs; which shews, that all the People in general are indifpenfably oblig'd to cultivate their Understandings. In England the Governments of Greece and

and Rome are the Subject of every Conversation, so that every Man is under a Necessity of perusing such Authors as treat of them, how disagreeable soever it may be to him; and this Study leads naturally to that of polite Literature. Mankind in general speak well in their respective Professions. What is the Reafon why our Magistrates, our Lawyers, our Physicians, and a great Number of the Clergy are abler Scholars, have a finer Taste and more Wit than Persons of all other Professions? The Reason is, because their Condition of Life requires a cultivated and enlightned Mind, in the fame Manner as a Merchant is oblig'd to be acquainted with his Traffick. Not long fince an English Nobleman, who was very young, came to fee me at Paris in his Return from Italy. He had writ a poetical Description of that Country, which, for Delicacy and Politeness may vie with any Thing we meet with in the Earl of Rochester, or in our Chaulieu, our Sarrasin, or Chapelle. The Translation I have given of it is so in-· expressive

expressive of the Strength and delicate Humour of the Original, that I am oblig'd seriously to ask Pardon of the Author, and of all who understand English. However, as this is the only Method I have to make his Lordship's Verses known, I shall here present you with them in our Tongue.

Qu'ay je donc vû dans l'Italie? Orgueil, Astuce, & Pauvreté, Grands Complimens, peu de Bonté Et beaucoup de Ceremonie.

L'extravagante Comedie, Que souvent l'Inquisition * Veut qu'on nomme Religion; Mais qu'ici nous nommons Folie,

La Nature en vain bienfaisante Veut enricher ses Lieux charmans, Des Prêtres la main desolante Etousse ses plus beaux présens.

LETTEL

0 2

^{*} His Lordship undoubtedly hints at the Farces which vertain Preachers act in the open Squares.

Les Monfignors, soy disant Grands, Seuls dans leurs Palais magnifiques Y sont d'illustres faineants, Sans argent, & sans domestiques.

Pour les Petits, sans liberté, Martyrs du joug qui les domine, Ils ont fait vœu de pauvreté, Priant Dieu par oissveté Et toûjours jeunant par famine.

Ces beaux lieux du Pape benis Semblent babitez par les Diables; Et les Habitans miserables Sont damnez dans le Paradis.



LETTER XXI.

ONTHE

Earl of Rochester

AND

Mr. WALLER.

THE Earl of Rochester's Name is universally known. Mr. de St. Evremont has made very frequent mention of him, but then he has represented this famous Nobleman in no other Light than as the Man of Pleasure, as one who was the Idol of the Fair; but with regard to my self, I would willingly describe in him the Man of O 3 Genius,

Genius, the great Poet. Among other Pieces which display the shining Imagination his Lordship only cou'd boast, he wrote some Satyrs on the same Subjects as those our celebrated Boileau made choice of. I don't know any better Method of improving the Taste, than to compare the Productions of such great Genius's as have exercis'd their Talent on the same Subject. Boileau declaims as follows against human Reason in his Satyr on Man.

Cependant à le voir plein de vapeurs légeres,

Soi-même se bereer de ses propres chimeres,

Lui seul de la nature est la baze & l'appui,

Et le dixieme ciel ne tourne que pour lui. De tous les Animaux il est ici le Maître; Qui pourroit le nier, poursuis tu? Moi peut-être.

Ce maître prétendu qui leur donne des loix,

Ce Roi des Animaux, combien à-t'il de Rois?

Yet,

the English Nation. 199
Yet, pleas'd with idle Whimsies of his
Brain,
And puff'd with Pride, this haughty

Thing wou'd fain

Be thought himself the only Stay and Prop

That holds the mighty Frame of Nature up.

The Skies and Stars his Properties must seem,

Of all the Creatures he's the Lord, he

And who is there, say you, that dares deny

So own'd a Truth? That may be, Sir, do I.

This boasted Monarch of the World who awes

The Creatures here, and with his Nod gives Laws;

This self-nam'd King, who thus pretends to be

The Lord of all, how many Lords has he?

OLDHAM a little alter'd.

O 4 THE

The Lord Rochester expresses himself, in his Satyr against Man, in pretty near the following Manner: But I must first desire you always to remember, that the Versions I give you from the English Poets are written with Freedom and Latitude; and that the Restraint of our Versification, and the Delicacies of the French Tongue, will not allow a Translator to convey into it the licentious Impetuosity and Fire of the English Numbers.

Cet Esprit que je haïs, cet Esprit plein d'erreur,

Ce n'est pas ma raison, c'est la tienne Docteur.

C'est la raison frivôle, inquiete, orgeuilleuse

Des sages Animaux, rivale dédaigneuse, Qui croit entr'eux & l'Ange, occuper le milieu,

Et pense être ici bas l'image de son Dieu. Vil atôme imparfait, qui croit, doute, dispute

Rampe, s'eleve, tombe, & nie encore sa chûte.

Qui

Qui nous dit je suis libre, en nous montrant ses fers,

Et dont l'ail trouble & faux, croit percer l'univers.

Allez, reverends Fous, bienheureux Fanatiques,

Compilez bien l'Amas de vos Riens scholastiques,

Peres de Visions, & d'Enigmes sacrez, Auteurs du Labirinthe, ou vous vous égarez.

Allez obscurement éclaireir vos misteres, Et courez dans l'école adorer vos chimeres.

Il est d'autres erreurs, il est de ces dévots Condamné par eux mêmes à l'ennui du repos.

Ce mystique encloîtré, sier de son Indolence

Tranquille, au sein de Dieu. Que peut il faire? Il pense.

Non, tu ne penses point, misérable, tu dors:

Inutile à la terre, & mis au rang des Morts.

Ton

Ton esprit énervé croupit dans la Molesse. Reveille toi, sois homme, & sors de ton Yvresse.

> L'homme est né pour agir, & tu pretens penser? &c.

The Original runs thus:

Hold, mighty Man, I cry all this we know,

And 'tis this very Reason I despise, This supernatural Gift, that makes a

Mite Think he's the Image of the Infinite;

Comparing his short Life, void of all rest, To the eternal and the ever blest.

This busy, puzzling Stirrer up of Doubt, That frames deep Mysteries, then finds 'em out,

Filling, with frantic Crowds of thinking Fools,

Those reverend Bedlams, Colleges and Schools;

Borne on whose Wings, each heavy Sot can pierce

The Limits of the boundless Universe.

30

So charming Ointments make an old Witch fly,

And bear a crippled Carcass through the Sky.

'Tis this exalted Power, whose Business lies

In Nonsense and Impossibilities.

This made a whimpical Philosopher,

Before the spacious World his Tub prefer;

And we have modern cloyster'd Coxcombs, who

Retire to think, 'cause they have nought to do:

But Thoughts are giv'n for Action's Government,

Where Action ceases, Thought's impertinent.

WHETHER these Ideas are true or false, 'tis certain they are express'd with an Energy and Fire which form the Poet. I shall be very far from attempting to examine philosophically into these Verses; to lay down the Pencil and take up the Rule and Compass on this Occasion; my only

only Design in this Letter, being to display the Genius of the English Poets, and therefore I shall continue in the same View.

THE celebrated Mr. Waller has been very much talk'd of in France, and Mr. de la Fontaine, St. Evremont and Bayle have written his Elogium, but still his Name only is known. He had much the same Reputation in London as Voiture had in Paris, and in my Opinion deserv'd it better. Voiture was born in an Age that was just emerging from Barbarity; an Age that was still rude and ignorant, the People of which aim'd at Wit, tho' they had not the least Pretensions to it, and sought for Points and Conceits instead of Sentiments. Bristol Stones are more easily found than Diamonds. Voiture, born with an easy and frivolous Genius, was the first who shone in this Aurora of French Literature. Had he come into the World after those great Genius's who spread such a Glory over the Age of Lewis the Fourteenth, he would either have

have been unknown, wou'd have been despis'd, or wou'd have corrected his Style. Boileau applauded him, but 'twas in his first Satyrs, at a Time when the Taste of that great Poet was not yet form'd. He was young, and in an Age when Persons form a Judgment of Men from their Reputation, and not from their Writings. Befides, Boileau was very partial both in his Encomiums and his Cenfures. He applauded Segrais, whose Works no Body reads; he abus'd Quinault, whose poetical Pieces every one has got by Heart, and is wholly filent upon La Fontaine. Waller, tho' a better Poet than Voiture, was not yet a finish'd Poet. The Graces breathe in fuch of Waller's Works as are writ in a tender Strain, but then they are languid thro' Negligence, and often disfigur'd with false Thoughts. The English had not, in his Time, attain'd the Art of correct Writing. But his ferious Compositions exhibit a Strength and Vigour which cou'd not have been expected from the Softness and Effemi-

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nacy of his other Pieces. He wrote an Elegy on Oliver Cromwell, which with all it's Faults is nevertheless look'd upon as a Master-Piece. To understand this Copy of Verses, you are to know that the Day Oliver died was remarkable for a great Storm. His Poem begins in this Manner:

Il n'est plus, s'en est fait, soumettons nous au sort,

Le ciel a fignalé ce jour par des tempêtes,

Et la voix des tonnerres éclatant sur nos têtes

Vient d'annoncer sa mort.

Par ses derniers soupirs il ébranle cet île; Cet île que son bras fit trembler tant de fois,

Quand dans le cours de ses Exploits, Il brisoit la tête des Rois,

Et soumettoit un peuple à son joug seul docile.

Mer tu t'en és troublé; O Mer tes flots émus

Semblent

Semblent dire en grondant aux plus lointains rivages

Que l'effroi de la terre & ton Maître n'est plus.

Tel au ciel autrefois s'envola Romulus, Tel il quita la Terre, au milieu des orages,

Tel d'un peuple guerrier il reçut les bomages;

Obéi dans sa vie, à sa mort adoré, Son palais sut un Temple, &c.

We must resign! Heav'n his great Soul does claim

In Storms as loud as his immortal Fame: His dying Groans, his last Breath shakes our Isle,

And Trees uncut fall for his fun'ral Pile:

About his Palace their broad Roots are tost

Into the Air; so Romulus was lost!

New Rome in such a Tempest miss'd her

King,

And from obeying fell to worshipping:

On Eta's Top thus Hercules lay dead, With ruin'd Oaks and Pines about him spread.

Nature herself took Notice of his Death,

And, fighing, swell'd the Sea with such a Breath,

That to remotest Shores the Billows rould,

Th'approaching Fate of his great Ruler told.

WALLER.

"Twas this Elogium that gave Occafion to the Reply (taken Notice of in
Bayle's Dictionary,) which Waller made
to King Charles the Second. This King,
to whom Waller had a little before, (as
is usual with Bards and Monarchs) prefented a Copy of Verses embroider'd with
Praises; reproach'd the Poet for not
writing with so much Energy and Fire
as when he had applauded the Usurper (meaning Oliver;) Sir, reply'd
Waller to the King, we Poets succeed
better in Fiction than in Truth. This
Answer

Answer was not so fincere as that which a Dutch Ambassador made, who, when the same Monarch complain'd that his Masters paid less Regard to him than they had done to Cromwell; Ab Sir! fays the Ambassador, Oliver was quite another Man -- 'Tis not my Intent to give a Commentary on Waller's Character, nor on that of any other Person; for I consider Men after their Death in no other Light than as they were Writers, and wholly difregard every Thing elfe. I shall only observe, that Waller, tho' born in a Court, and to an Estate of five or fix thousand Pounds Sterling a Year, was never fo proud or fo indolent as to lay afide the happy Talent which Nature had indulg'd him. The Earls of Dorfet and Roscommon, the two Dukes of Buckingham, the Lord Halifax and fo many other Noblemen, did not think the Reputation they obtain'd of very great Poets and illustrious Writers, any way derogatory to their Quality. They are more glorious for their Works than for P their

their Titles. These cultivated the polite Arts with as much Assiduity, as the they had been their whole Dependance. They also have made Learning appear venerable in the Eyes of the Vulgar, who have need to be led in all Things by the Great; and who nevertheless fashion their Manners less after those of the Nobility (in England I mean) than in any other Country in the World.



LETTER

LETTER XXII.

ON

Mr. POPE

And some other Famous

POETS.

INTENDED to treat of Mr. Prior, one of the most amiable English Poets, whom you saw Plenipotentiary and Envoy Extraordinary at Paris in 1712. I also design'd to have given you some Idea of the Lord Roscommon's and the Lord Dorset's Muse; but I find that to do this I should be oblig'd to write a large Volume, and that after P 2 much

much Pains and Trouble you wou'd have but an imperfect Idea of all those Works. Poetry is a kind of Music, in which a Man should have some Knowledge before he pretends to judge of it. When I give you a Translation of some Passages from those foreign Poets, I only prick down, and that imperfectly, their Music; but then I cannot express the Taste of their Harmony.

THERE is one English Poem especially which I should despair of ever making you understand, the Title where-of is Hudibras. The Subject of it is the Civil War in the Time of the Grand Rebellion; and the Principles and Practice of the Puritans are therein ridicul'd. 'Tis Don Quixot, 'tis our * Sa-

^{*} A Species of Satyr in Profe and Verse written in France in 1594, against the Chiefs of the League at that Time. This Satyr which is also call'd Catholicon a'Espagne, was look'd upon as a Master-piece. Rapin, Le Roi, Pithou, Passerat and Chrêtien, the greatest Wits of that Age, are the Authors of it; and 'twas entitled Ménippée, from Menippus, a cynical Philosopher, who had written Letters sill'd with sharp, satyrical Expressions, in Imitation of Varro, who compos'd Satyrs which he entitled Satyra Menippea.

tyre Menippée blended together. I never found fo much Wit in one fingle Book as in that, which at the fame Time is the most difficult to be translated. Who wou'd believe that a Work which paints in fuch lively and natural Colours the feveral Foibles and Follies of Mankind, and where we meet with more Sentiments than Words, should baffle the Endeavours of the ablest Translator? But the Reason of this is; almost every Part of it alludes to particular Incidents. The Clergy are there made the principal Object of Ridicule, which is understood but by few among the Laity. To explain this a Commentary would be requisite, and Humour when explain'd is no longer Humour. Whoever fets up for a Commentator of fmart Sayings and Repartees, is himfelf a Blockhead. This is the Reason why the Works of the ingenious Dean Swift, who has been call'd the English Rabelais, will never be well understood in France. This Gentleman has the Honour (in common with Rabelais) of being a Priest, and like

like him laughs at every Thing. But in my humble Opinion, the Title of the English Rabelais which is given the Dean, is highly derogatory to his Ge-The former has interspers'd his unaccountably-fantastic and unintelligible Book, with the most gay Strokes of Humour, but which at the fame Time has a greater Proportion of Impertinence. He has been vaftly lavish of Erudition, of Smut, and infipid Raillery. An agreeable Tale of two Pages is purchas'd at the Expence of whole Volumes of Nonsense. There are but few Persons, and those of a grotesque Tafte, who pretend to understand, and to esteem this Work; for as to the rest of the Nation, they laugh at the pleafant and diverting Touches which are found in Rabelais and despise his Book. He is look'd upon as the Prince of Buffoons. The Readers are vex'd to think that a Man who was Master of so much Wit should have made for wetched a Use of it. He is an intoxicated Philosopher, who never writ but when he was in Liquor. DEAN

DEAN Swift is Rabelais in his Senses, and frequenting the politest Company. The former indeed is not so gay as the latter, but then he possesses all the Delicacy, the Justness, the Choice, the good Taste, in all which Particulars our giggling rural Vicar Rabelais is wanting. The poetical Numbers of Dean Swift are of a singular and almost inimitable Taste; true Humour whether in Prose or Verse, seems to be his peculiar Talent, but whoever is desirous of understanding him perfectly, must visit the Island in which he was born.

'Twill be much easier for you to form an Idea of Mr. Pope's Works. He is in my Opinion the most elegant, the most correct Poet; and at the same Time the most harmonious (a Circumstance which redounds very much to the Honour of this Muse) that England ever gave Birth to. He has mellow'd the harsh Sounds of the English Trumpet to the soft Accents of the Flute. His Compositions may be easily translated, because they are vastly clear and P 4

perspicuous; besides, most of his Subjects are general, and relative to all Nations.

His Essay on Criticism will soon be known in France, by the Translation which l'Abbé de Renel has made of it.

HERE is an Extract from his Poem entitled the Rape of the Lock, which I just now translated with the Latitude I usually take on these Occasions; for once again, nothing can be more ridiculous than to translate a Poet literally.

UMBRIEL, à l'instant, vieil Gnome rechigné,

Va d'une aîle pesante & d'un air renfrogné

Chercher en murmurant la Caverne profonde,

Où loin des doux raïons que répand l'æil du monde

La Déesse aux vapeurs a choisi son sé-

Les tristes Aquilons y sistent à l'entour.

 E_{ξ}

Et le soufle mal sain de leur aride haleine Y porte aux environs la fieure & la migraine.

Sur un riche Sofa derriere un Paravent Loin des flambeaux, du bruit, des parleurs & du vent,

La quinteuse Déesse incessamment repose, Le cœur gros de chagrin, sans en savoir la cause.

N'aiant pensé jamais, l'esprit toûjours troublé,

L'æil chargé, le teint pâle, & l'hypocondre enflé.

La medisante Envie, est assise auprès d'elle,

Vieil spectre féminin, décrépite pucelle, Avec un air devot déchirant son prochain,

Et chansonnant les Gens l'Evangile à la main.

Sur un lit plein de fleurs negligemment panchée

Une jeune Beauté non loin d'elle est couchée,

C'est l'Affectation qui grassaie en par-

Ecoute

Ecoute sans entendre, & lorgne en regardant.

Qui rougit sans pudeur, & rit de tout sans joie,

De cent maux différens prétend qu'elle est la proie;

Et pleine de santé sous le rouge & le fard,

Se plaint avec molesse, & se pame avec Art.

UMBRIEL, a dusky, melancholy Sprite
As ever sullied the fair Face of
Light,

Down to the central Earth, his proper Scene,

Repairs to fearch the gloomy Cave of Spleen.

Swift on his footy Pinions flits the Gnome,

And in a Vapour reach'd the difinal Dome.

No chearful Breeze this sullen Region . knows,

The dreaded East is all the Wind that blows.

Here,

Here, in a Grotto, shelter'd close from Air,

And screen'd in Shades from Day's detested Glare,

She fighs for ever on her pensive Bed,

Pain at her Side, and Megrim at her Head,

Two Handmaids wait the Throne: Alike in Place,

But diff'ring far in Figure and in Face,

Here stood Ill-nature like an ancient Maid,

Her wrinkled Form in black and white array'd;

With Store of Prayers for Mornings, Nights, and Noons,

Her Hand is fill'd; her Bosom with Lampoons.

There Affectation, with a fickly Mein, Shows in her Cheek the Roses of eighteen,

Practis'd to list, and hang the Head aside,

Faints into Airs, and languishes with Pride;

On

On the Rich Quilt sinks with becoming Woe,

Wrapt in a Gown, for Sickness and for Show.

This Extract in the Original, (not in the faint Translation I have given you of it, may be compar'd to the Description of La Molesse (Softness or Esseminacy) in Boileau's Lutrin.

METHINKS I now have given you Specimens enough from the English Poets. I have made fome transient mention of their Philosophers, but as for good Historians among them, I don't know of any; and indeed a French Man was forc'd to write their History. Possibly the English Genius, which is either languid or impetuous, has not yet requir'd that unaffected Eloquence, that plain but majestic Air which History requires. Possibly too, the Spirit of Party which exhibits Objects in a dim and confus'd Light, may have sunk the Credit of their Historians. One half of the Nation is al-

ways at Variance with the other half. I have met with People who affur'd me that the Duke of Marlborough was a Coward, and that Mr. Pope was a Fool; just as some Jesuits in France declare Pascal to have heen a Man of little or no Genius; and fome Jansenists affirm Father Bourdaloue to have been a mere Babbler. The Jacobites confider Mary Queen of Scots as a pious Heroine, but those of an opposite Party look upon her as a Prostitute, an Adulteress, a Murtherer. Thus the English have Memorials of the feveral Reigns, but no fuch Thing as a History. There is indeed now living, one Mr. Gordon, (the Publick are oblig'd to him for a Translation of Tacitus) who is very capable of writing the History of his own Country, but Rapin de Thoyras got the Start of him. To conclude, in my Opinion, the English have not fuch good Historians as the French, have no fuch Thing as a real Tragedy, have feveral delightful Comedies, some wonderful Passages in certain of their Poems, and boast of Philosophers that

that are worthy of instructing Mankind. The English have reap'd very great Benefit from the Writers of our Nation, and therefore we ought, (since they have not scrupled to be in our Debt,) to borrow from them. Both the English and we came after the Italians, who have been our Instructors in all the Arts, and whom we have surpass'd in some. I cannot determine which of the three Nations ought to be honour'd with the Palm; but happy the Writer who could display their various Merits.



LETTER XXIII.

ONTHE

REGARD

That ought to be shown to

MEN OF LETTERS.

other People have Foundations establish'd in favour of the polite Arts like those in France. There are Universities in most Countries, but 'tis in France only that we meet with so beneficial an Encouragement for Astronomy, and all Parts of the Mathematicks,

maticks, for Physick, for Researches into Antiquity, for Painting, Sculpture and Achitecture. Lewis the Fourteenth has immortaliz'd his Name by these several Foundations, and this Immortality did not cost him two hundred thousand Livres a Year.

I wery much wonder at, is, that as the Parliament of Great-Britain have promis'd a Reward of twenty thousand Pounds Sterling to any Person who may discover the Longitude, they should never have once thought to imitate Lewis the Fourteenth in his Munisicence with regard to the Arts and Sciences.

MERIT indeed meets in England with Rewards of another kind, which redound more to the Honour of the Nation. The English have so great a Veneration for exalted Talents, that a Man of Merit in their Country is always sure of making his Fortune. Mr. Addison in France would have been elected a Member of one of the Academies, and, by the Credit of some Women, might have obtain'd a year-

ly Pension of twelve hundred Livres; or else might have been imprison'd in the Bastile, upon Pretence that certain Strokes in his Tragedy of Cato had been discover'd, which glanc'd at the Porter of some Man in Power. Mr. Addison was rais'd to the Post of Secretary of State in England. Sir Isaac Newton was made Warden of the Royal Mint. Mr. Congreve had a confiderable * Employment. Mr. Prior was Plenipotentiary. Dr. Swift is Dean of St. Patrick in Dublin, and is more rever'd in Ireland than the Primate himself. The Religion which Mr. Pope professes excludes him indeed from Preferments of ev'ry kind, but then it did not prevent his gaining two hundred Thousand Livres by his excellent Translation of Homer. I my self saw a long Time in France the Author of + Rhadamistus ready to perish for Hunger: And the Son of one of the greatest Men tour Country ever gave Birth to, and who was beginning to run the noble Ca-

^{*} Secretary for Jamaica. + Mr. de Crebillon. ‡ Racine.

reer which his Father had fet him, would have been reduc'd to the Extremes of Misery, had he not been patroniz'd by Monsieur Fagon.

But the Circumstance which mostly encourages the Arts in England, is the great Veneration which is paid them. The Picture of the prime Minister hangs over the Chimney of his own Closet, but I have feen that of Mr. Pope in twenty Noblemens Houses. Sir Isaac Newton was rever'd in his Life-time, and had a due respect paid to him after his Death; the greatest Men in the Nation disputing who shou'd have the Honour of holding up his Pall. Go into Westminster-Abbey, and you'll find that what raises the Admiration of the Spectator is not the Maufoleums of the English Kings, but the Monuments which the Gratitude of the Nation has erected, to perpetuate the Memory of those illustrious Men who contributed to its Glory. We view their Statues in that Abbey in the same Manner, as those of Sophocles, Plato and other immortalPersonages were view'd in Athens;

and

and I am perfuaded, that the bare Sight of those glorious Monuments has fir'd more than one Breast, and been the Occasion of their becoming great Men.

THE English have even been reproach'd with paying too extravagant Honours to mere Merit, and cenfured for interring the celebrated Actress Mrs. Oldfield in Westminster-Abbey, with almost the same Pomp as Sir Isaac Newton. Some pretend that the English had paid her these great Funeral Honours, purposely to make us more strongly fensible of the Barbarity and Injustice which they object to us, for having buried Mademoiselle le Couvreur ignominiously in the Fields.

Bur be affur'd from me, that the English were prompted by no other Principle, in burying Mrs. Oldfield in Westminster-Abbey, than their good Sense. They are far from being fo ridiculous as to brand with Infamy an Art which has immortaliz'd an Euripides and a Sophocles; or to exclude from the Body of their Citizens a Sett of People

whofe Q 2

whose Business is to set off with the utmost Grace of Speech and Action, those Pieces which the Nation is proud of.

Under the Reign of Charles the First, and in the Beginning of the Civil Wars rais'd by a Number of rigid Fanaticks, who at last were the Victims to it; a great many Pieces were publish'd against Theatrical and other Shews, which were attack'd with the greater Virulence, because that Monarch and his Queen, Daughter to Henry the Fourth of France, were passionately fond of them.

ONE Mr. Prynne, a Man of most furiously scrupulous Principles, who wou'd have thought himself damn'd had he wore a Cassock instead of a short Cloak, and have been glad to see one half of Mankind cut the other to Pieces for the Glory of God, and the Propaganda Fide; took it into his Head to write a most wretched Satyr against some pretty good Comedies, which were exhibited very innocently every Night before

fore their Majesties. He quoted the Authority of the Rabbis, and some Pasfages from St. Bonaventure, to prove that the Œdipus of Sophocles was the Work of the evil Spirit; that Terence was excommunicated ipso facto; and added, that doubtless Brutus, who was a very fevere Jansenist, affassinated Julius Cafar, for no other Reason, but because he, who was Pontifex Maximus, prefum'd to write a Tragedy the Subject of which was Œdipus. Lastly, he declar'd that all who frequented the Theatre were excommunicated, as they thereby renounc'd their Baptism. This was casting the highest Insult on the King and all the Royal Family; and as the English lov'd their Prince at that Time. they cou'd not bear to hear a Writer talk of excommunicating him, tho' they themselves afterwards cut his Head off. Prynne was fummon'd to appear before the Star-Chamber; his wonderful Book, from which Father Le Brun stole his, was fentenc'd to be burnt by the common Hangman, and himself to lose his Q 3 Ears.

Ears. His Tryal is now extant.

THE Italians are far from attempting to cast a Blemish on the Opera, or to excommunicate Signior Senefino or Signora Cuzzoni. With regard to my felf, I cou'd presume to wish that the Magistrates wou'd suppress I know not what contemptible Pieces, written against the Stage. For when the English and Italians hear that we brand with the greatest Mark of Infamy an Art in which we excell; that we excommunicate Persons who receive Salaries from the King; that we condemn as impious a Spectacle exhibited in Convents and Monasteries; that we dishonour Sports in which Lewis the Fourteenth, and Lewis the Fifteenth perform'd as Actors; that we give the Title of the Devil's Works to Pieces which are receiv'd by Magistrates of the most severe Character, and represented before a virtuous Queen; when, I say, Foreigners are told of this insolent Conduct, this Contempt for the Royal Authority, and this Gothic Rufficity which some presume to call Christian Severity;

verity; what an Idea must they entertain of our Nation? And how will it be possible for 'em to conceive, either that our Laws give a Sanction to an Art which is declar'd infamous, or that some Persons dare to stamp with Infamy an Art which receives a Sanction from the Laws, is rewarded by Kings, cultivated and encourag'd by the greatest Men, and admir'd by whole Nations? And that Father Le Brun's impertinent Libel against the Stage, is seen in a Bookseller's Shop, standing the very next to the immortal Labours of Racine, of Corneille, of Moliere, &c.



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LET-

LETTER XXIV.

ONTHE

ROYAL SOCIETY

AND OTHER

ACADEMIES.

Sciences many Years before us, but then it is not under fuch prudent Regulations as ours, the only Reason of which very possibly is, because it was founded before the Academy of Paris; for had it been founded after, it would very probably have adopted some of

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of the fage Laws of the former, and im-

prov'd upon others.

Two Things, and those the most esfential to Man, are wanting in the Royal Society of London, I mean Rewards and Laws. A Seat in the Academy at Paris is a fmall, but secure Fortune to a Geometrician or a Chymist; but this is so far from being the Case at London, that the feveral Members of the Royal Society are at a continual, tho' indeed fmall Expence. Any Man in England who declares himself a Lover of the Mathematicks and natural Philosophy, and expresfes an Inclination to be a Member of the Royal Society, is immediately elected into it *. But in France'tis not enough that a Man who aspires to the Honour of being a Member of the Academy, and of receiving the Royal Stipend, has a love

^{*} The Reader will call to Mind that these Letters were written about 1728 or 30, since which Time the Names of the several Candidates are, by a Law of the Royal Society, posted up in it, in order that a Choice may be made of such Persons only as are qualified to be Members. The celebrated Mr. de Fontenelle had the Honour to pass thro this Ordeal.

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for the Sciences; he must at the same Time be deeply skill'd in them; and is oblig'd to dispute the Seat with Competitors who are so much the more formidable as they are fir'd by a Principle of Glory, by Interest, by the Dissiculty it self, and by that Inslexibility of Mind, which is generally sound in those who devote themselves to that pertinacious Study, the Mathematicks.

THE Academy of Sciences is prudently confin'd to the Study of Nature, and, indeed, this is a Field spacious enough for fifty or threescore Persons to range in. That of London mixes indiscriminately Literature with Physicks: But methinks the founding an Academy merely for the polite Arts is more judicious, as it prevents Confusion, and the joining, in some Measure, of Heterogeneals, such as a Differtation on the Head-dresses of the Roman Ladies with an hundred or more new Curves.

As there is very little Order and Regularity in the Royal Society, and not the least Encouragement; and that the Academy

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demy of Paris is on a quite different Foot, 'tis no wonder that our Transactions are drawn up in a more just and beautiful Manner than those of the English. Soldiers who are under a regular Discipline, and besides well paid, must necesfarily, at last, perform more glorious Atchievements than others who are mere Voluntiers. It must indeed be confess'd that the Royal Society boast their Newton, but then he did not owe his Knowledge and Discoveries to that Body; so far from it, that the latter were intelligible to very few of his Fellow-Members. A Genius like that of Sir Isaac belong'd to all the Academies in the World, because all had a thousand Things to learn of him.

THE celebrated Dean Swift form'd a Design, in the latter End of the late Queen's Reign, to found an Academy for the English Tongue upon the Model of that of the French. This Project was promoted by the late Earl of Oxford, Lord High Treasurer, and much more by the Lord Bolingbroke, Secre-

tary

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tary of State, who had the happy Talent of Speaking without Premeditation in the Parliament-house with as much Purity as Dean Swift writ in his Closet, and who would have been the Ornament and Protector of that Academy. Those only wou'd have been chosen Members of it, whose Works will last as long as the English Tongue, fuch as Dean Swift, Mr. Prior. whom we faw here invested with a publick Character, and whose Fame in England is equal to that of La Fontaine in France; Mr. Pope the English Boileau, Mr. Congreve who may be call'd their Moliere, and feveral other eminent Persons whose Names I. have forgot; all these would have rais'd the Glory of that Body to a great Height even in it's Infancy. But Queen Anne being fnatch'd fuddenly from the World, the Whigs were refolv'd to ruin the Protectors of the intended Academy, a Circumstance that was of the most fatal Consequence to polite Literature. The Members of this Academy would have

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have had a very great Advantage over those who first form'd that of the French, for Swift, Prior, Congreve, Dryden, Pope, Addison, &c. had fix'd the English Tongue by their Writings; whereas Chapelain, Colletet, Cassaigne, Faret, Perrin, Cotin, our first Academicians, were a Disgrace to their Country; and so much Ridicule is now attach'd to their very Names, that if an Author of some Genius in this Age had the Missortune to be call'd Chapelain or Cotin, he would be under a Necessity of changing it.

ONE Circumstance, to which the English Academy should especially have attended, is, to have prescrib'd to themselves Occupations of a quite different kind from those with which our Academicians amuse themselves. A Wit of this Country ask'd me for the Memoirs of the French Academy. I answer'd, they have no Memoirs, but have printed threescore or fourscore Volumes in Quarto of Compliments. The Gentleman perus'd one or two of 'em,

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but without being able to understand the Style in which they were written, tho' he understood all our good Authors perfectly. All, fays he, I fee in these elegant Discourses is, that the Member elect having affur'd the Audience that his Predecessor was a great Man, that Cardinal Richelieu was a very great Man, that the Chancellor Seguier was a pretty great Man, that Lewis the Fourteenth was a more than great Man; the Director answers in the very same Strain. and adds, that the Member elect may also be a fort of great Man, and that himself, in Quality of Director, must also have some Share in this Greatness.

THE Cause why all these academical Discourses have unhappily done so little Honour to this Body is evident enough. Vitium est temporis potius quam hominis. (The Fault is owing to the Age rather than to particular Persons.) It grew up insensibly into a Custom for every Academician to repeat these Elogiums at his Reception; 'twas laid down as a kind of Law, that the Publick should be indulg'd

the English Nation. 239 dulg'd from Time to Time the fullen Satisfaction of yawning over these Productions. If the Reason should afterwards be fought, why the greatest Genius's who have been incorporated into that Body have fometimes made the worst Speeches; I answer, that 'tis wholly owing to a strong Propension, the Gentlemen in Question had to shine, and to display a thread-bare, worn-out Subject in a new and uncommon Light. The Necessity of faying fomething, the Perplexity of having nothing to fay, and a Desire of being witty, are three Circumstances which alone are capable of making even the greatest Writer ridiculous. These Gentlemen, not being able to strike out any new Thoughts, hunted after a new Play of Words, and deliver'd themselves without thinking at all; in like Manner as People who should seem to chew with great Eager-

ness, and make as tho' they were eating, at the same Time that they were

just starv'd.

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"Tis a Law in the French Academy, to publish all those Discourses by which only they are known, but they should rather make a Law never to print any of them.

But the Academy of the Belles Lettres have a more prudent and more useful Object, which is, to prefent the Publick with a Collection of Transactions that abound with curious Researches and Critiques. These Transactions are already esteem'd by Foreigners; and it were only to be wish'd, that some Subjects in them had been more thoroughly examin'd, and that others had not been treated at all. As for Instance, we should have been very well satisfied, had they omitted I know not what Differtation on the Prerogative of the Right. Hand over the Left; and some others, which tho' not publish'd under so ridiculous a Title, are yet written on Subjects that are almost as frivolous and filly.

THE Academy of Sciences, in fuch of their Researches as are of a more difficult

the English Nation. 241 difficult kind and a more fensible Use, embrace the Knowledge of Nature and the Improvements of the Arts. We may presume that such profound, such uninterrupted Pursuits as these, such exact Calculations, fuch refin'd Discoveries, fuch extensive and exalted Views, will, at last, produce something that may prove of Advantage to the Universe. Hitherto, as we have observ'd together, the most useful Discoveries have been made in the most barbarous Times. One wou'd conclude, that the Bufiness of the most enlightned Ages and the most learned Bodies, is, to argue and debate on Things which were invented by ignorant People. We know exactly the Angle which the Sail of a Ship is to make with the Keel, in order to its failing better; and yet Columbus discover'd America, without having the least Idea of the Property of this Angle: However I am far from inferring from hence, that we are to confine our felves merely to a blind Practice, but happy it were, wou'd Natu-

ralists

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ralists and Geometricians unite, as much as possible, the Practice with the Theory.

STRANGE, but so it is, that those Things which reflect the greatest Honour on the human Mind, are frequently of the least Benefit to it! A Man who understands the four Fundamental Rules of Arithmetic, aided by a little good Sense, shall amass prodigious Wealth in Trade, shall become a Sir Peter Delmé, a Sir Richard Hopkins, a Sir Gilbert Heathcot, whilst a poor Algebraist spends his whole Life in fearching for aftonishing Properties and Relations in Numbers, which at the fame time are of no manner of Use, and will not acquaint him with the Nature of Exchanges. This is very nearly the Case with most of the Arts; there is a certain Point, beyond which, all Refearches ferve to no other Purpofe, than merely to delight an inquifitive Mind. Those ingenious and useless Truths may be compar'd to Stars, which, by being plac'd at too great a Distance,

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Distance, cannot afford us the least Light.

WITH regard to the French Academy, how great a Service would they do to Literature, to the Language, and the Nation, if, instead of publishing a set of Compliments annually, they would give us new Editions of the valuable Works written in the Age of Lewis the Fourteenth, purged from the several Errors of Diction which are crept into them. There are many of these Errors in Corneille and Moliere, but those in La Fontaine are very numerous. Such as could not be corrected, might at least be pointed out. By this Means, as all the Europeans read those Works, they would teach them our Language in its utmost Purity, which, by that Means, would be fix'd to a lafting Standard; and valuable French Books being then printed at the King's Expence, would prove one of the most glorious Monuments the Nation could boaft. I have been told that Boileau formerly made this Proposal, and that it has fince been R 2 revived

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revived by a * Gentleman eminent for his Genius, his fine Sense, and just Taste for Criticism; but this Thought has met with the Fate of many other useful Projects, of being applauded and neglected.

* L'Abbé de Rothelin of the French Academy.

FINIS.



A

LETTER

Concerning the

Burning of ALTENA,

As related in the

HISTORY OF CHARLES XII.

KING of SWEDEN.

LETTER

CONCERNING THE

Burning of ALTENA,

As related in the

HISTORY OF CHARLES XII.

Paris 25 April 1733.

France of getting Books from Holland, is the Reason why the ninth Tome of the Bibliotheque Raisonnée came but late to my Hands. And I will observe by the way, that if the Journal is equal to the Pieces I have perused in it, 'tis a Missortune for our Men of Letters in France, that they are not acquainted with that Work.

R 4

IN

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In Page 496, Part II. of the ninth Tome abovemention'd, I found a Letter in which I am accus'd of aspersing the City of *Hamburgh* in the History of *Charles* the Twelfth.

A few Days fince one Mr. Richey of Hamburgh, a Scholar and a Man of Merit, having honoured me with a Visit, revived the Complaint I just now mention'd in the Name of his Fellow-citizens.

HERE follows the Relation I gave, and what I my felf am obliged to declare, In the Heat of the unhappy War which made fo dreadful a Havock in the North, the Counts of Steinbok and of Welling, the Swedish Generals, form'd Anno 1713, in the very City of Hamburgh, a Resolution to burn Altena, a Trading City, and Subject to the Danes; for the Commerce of this City began to flourish so much, that the Hamburghers grew a little Jealous of it.

This Resolution was executed unmercifully in the Night of the Ninth of January. These Generals lay in Hamburgh that very Night; they lay in it the Tenth, the Burning of ALTENA. 249
Tenth, Eleventh, Twelfth and Thirteenth; and dated from the last mention'd City the Letters they wrote to clear themselves, from the Imputation of be-

ing the Authors of fo barbarous a Cataftrophe.

"Tis besides certain, and the Hamburghers themselves don't deny it, that the Gates of their City were shut against several of the Inhabitants of Altena; against old Men, and big-belly'd Women, who came to implore an Asylum; and that several of these unhappy Wretches expired under the Walls of Hamburgh, frozen with Cold, and oppress'd with Misery, at the same time that their Country was burnt to Ashes.

I was oblig'd to insert these Particulars in the History of Charles the Twelfth. One of the Persons who surnished me with Materials, declares in his Letter, in the most positive Terms, that the Hamburghers had given Count Steinbok a Sum of Money, in order to engage him to destroy Altena, as being their Rival in Trade.

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I did not however adopt fo grievous an Accufation. What Reason soever I may have to be convinc'd of the great Depravity of Mankind, I yet was never so Credulous with regard to Crimes. I have combated, and that efficaciously more than one Calumny; and am even the only Man who dar'd to justify the Memory of Count Piper, by Arguments, at the Time that all Europe slander'd

him by Conjectures.

INSTEAD therefore of following the Account which had been communicated to me, I contented myself with relating, That it was reported, some Hamburghers had given a Sum of Money fecretly to Count Steinbok. This Report became universal, and was founded on Appearances. An Historian is allow'd to infert Reports as well as Facts, and when he publishes a general Report, an Opinion, merely as an Opinion, and not as Truth, he is neither responsible for it, nor ought to be accus'd in any manner for fo doing. But when he is inform'd that this popular Opinion is false and slanderous, 'tis then

the Burning of ALTENA. 251 then his Duty to declare it, and to thank, in a publick Manner, those who have undeceived him.

THIS is exactly my Case. Mr. Richey has prov'd to me the Innocence of his Fellow-citizens, and the Bibliotheque Raisonée has also very solidly refuted the Accufation levelled against the City of Hamburgh. The Author of the Letter against me, is only to blame for faying that I positively afferted that the City of Hamburgh was guilty; but he ought to have made a Distinction between the Opinion of one part of the North, which I gave as a vague, random Report, and the Affirmation with which he charges me. Had I indeed declared, That the City of Hamburgh purchas'd the Ruin of the City of Altena, I then wou'd have ask'd Pardon in the most humble manner for making fuch an Affertion, being perfuaded that there is no Shame on these Occafions, but to perfift in a Fault when 'tis prov'd to be fuch. But I declare the Truth, in relating that fuch a Report was fpread; and I also declare the Truth, in affuring

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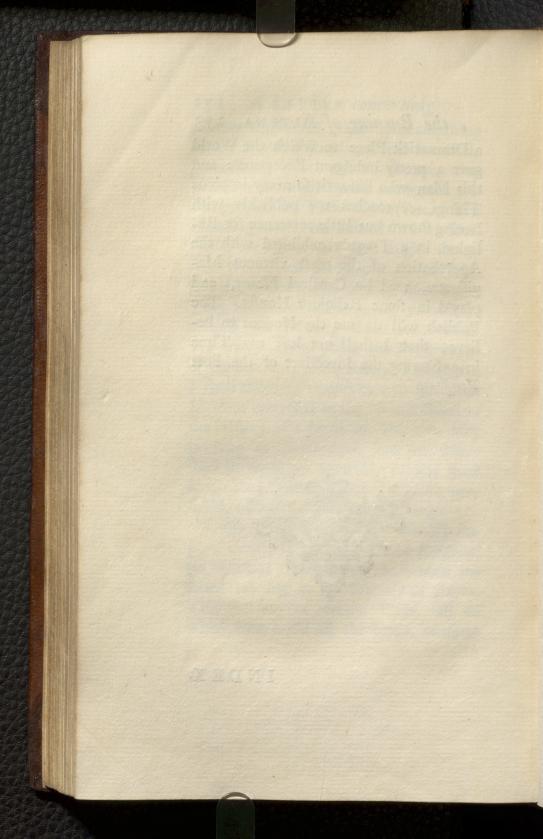
affuring the World, that upon enquiring strictly into this Report, I find it entirely groundless. I am also to declare, that Altena was infected with contagious Distempers at the Time of the Fire. The Hamburghers I am affured had no Hofpitals, no Place were they might shelter from the rest of the People, the old Men and the Women who died in their Sight. They therefore cannot in any manner be accus'd for refusing them Admittance. We are always to prefer the Prefervation of our own City to the Safety of Strangers. I shall take the utmost care to have this Incident corrected in the New Edition of the History of Charles the Twelfth, now printing at Amsterdam, and the whole shall be set down agreeable to the most scrupulous Truth, which I always profess'd, and will prefer to all Things.

I also heard, that in some Weekly Papers, certain Letters of the Poet Rousseau, (as injurious as ill written) have been inserted relating to the Tragedy of Zayre. This Author of several Plays, all of which were his doff the Stage, censures

the Burning of ALTENA. 253 a Dramatick Piece to which the World gave a pretty indulgent Reception: and this Man who has writ fo many impious Things, reproaches me publickly with having shown but little reverence for Religion in a Tragedy exhibited with the Approbation of the most virtuous Magistrates, read by Cardinal Fleury, and play'd in some Religious Houses. The Publick will do me the Honour to believe, that I shall not lose my Time in answering the Invectives of the Poet Rousseau.



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WHIGS. A confiderable Party in England, opponents of the Tories, p. 36.

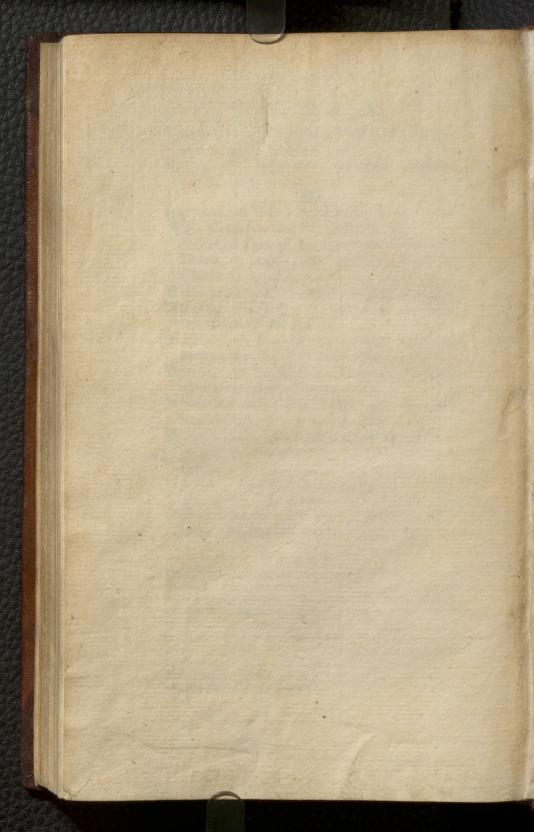
WHISTON (Mr.) His Notion with regard to

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Wycherley (Mr.) Author of feveral excellent Comedies. A great Imitator of Moliere, particularly in his Plain-Dealer, p. 182. Plot of that Comedy, and of another entitled the Country Wife, p. 183, 186. This Poet in great Favour with the celebrated Miftress of Charles II, p. 182.

ERRATA.

PAGE 36. Line 16. for abridging it, read abridging its Power. p. 39. l. 1. f. at a Time of Life, r. in an Age. ib. l. 22. f. fable mix'd kind of mortal, r. mix'd Being. p. 47. l. 12. dele bandsome and. p. 64. l. 23. f. the, r that. p. 72. l. 12. f. need not, r. cannot. p. 97. l. 14. r. Des Cartes born not to discover the Errors of Antiquity, but to substitute his own in the Room of them. p. 103. l. 12. before what, put of. p. 117. l. 7. f. new, r. two. p. 145. l. 12. before white, put the. p. 177. l. 24. f. gleam, r. gloom. p. 247. l. 6. before the Journal, put the rest of the Journal.



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